



# *A Revert's Companion*

~Umm 'Isa

*“Whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens  
his heart to Islam” (Qur’an 6:125)*

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## 1. *You are not alone*

Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh,

Welcome to the community of 1.5 billion people (approx.)

Congratulations! Glad tidings! The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Glad tidings to the one who believed in me and saw me, and sevenfold glad tidings to the one who believed in me but did not see me. (Ahmad) You are not alone in your journey to Islam. Know that every year there are thousands of people embracing Islam throughout the globe. These people are not the poor who pretend to be Muslims to get money and charity; rather these are highly qualified people in their respective fields. They are the Blacks, the Whites, the Spanish, the Chinese, the Latinos, the British etc.

Here are some quotes from famous reverts to Islam:

Cat Stevens, Former Pop star, UK:

"...And when I received the book (Qur'an), a guidance that would explain everything to me - who I was; what was the purpose of life; what was the reality and what would be the reality; and where I came from - I realized that this was the true religion; religion not in the sense the West understands it, not the type for only your old age. In the West, whoever wishes to embrace a religion and make it his only way of life is deemed a fanatic. I was not a fanatic; I was at first confused between the body and the soul. Then I realized that the body and soul are not apart and you don't have to go to the mountain to be religious. We must follow the will of God. Then we can rise higher than the angels. The first thing I wanted to do now was to be a Muslim...On reading the Qur'an, I now realized that all the Prophets sent by God brought the same message...Everything made so much sense. This is the beauty of the Qur'an; it asks you to reflect and reason, and not to worship the sun or moon but the One who has created everything. The Qur'an asks man to reflect upon the sun and moon and God's creation in general. Do you realize how different the sun is from the moon? They are at varying distances from the earth, yet appear the same size to us; at times, one seems to overlap the other.

Even when many of the astronauts go to space, they see the insignificant size of the earth and vastness of space. They become very religious, because they have seen the Signs of God.

When I read the Qur'an further, it talked about prayer, kindness and charity. I was not a Muslim yet, but I felt that the only answer for me was the Qur'an, and God had sent it to me... Now I realize I can get in direct contact with God, unlike Christianity or any other religion."

Jermaine Jackson, USA, brother of Michael Jackson:

"Having embraced Islam, I felt as if I were born again. I found in Islam the answers to those queries which I had failed to find in Christianity. Particularly, it was only Islam that provided satisfactory answer to the question relating to the birth of Christ. For the first time I was convinced about the religion itself...There are many things where there is consensus between Christianity and Islam, and Qur'an presents Holy Christ as a virtuous Prophet. Then, I wondered, why Christian America levels baseless allegations against Muslims? This made me gloomy. I made up my mind that I would do my best to dispel the wrong image of Muslims, portrayed by the American media...

When I came back from Mecca I got him (Michael Jackson) a lot of books and he asked me lots of things about my religion and I told him that it's peaceful and beautiful. He read everything and he was proud of me that I found something that would give me inner strength and peace."

Malcolm X, USA

Hajj (pilgrimage) is what changed his perception of Islam. It was during his pilgrimage that he began to write some letters to his loyal assistants at the newly formed Muslim Mosque in Harlem. He asked that his letter be duplicated and distributed to the press:

"Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and the overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colours and races here in this ancient Holy Land, the House of Abraham, Muhammad, and all the other Prophets of the Holy Scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors...

"You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen, and experienced, has forced me to

rearrange much of my thought-patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions. This was not too difficult for me. Despite my firm convictions, I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds it. I have always kept an open mind, which necessary to the flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of intelligent search for truth.

"During the past eleven days here in the Muslim world, I have eaten from the same plate, drunk from the same glass, and slept in the same bed (or on the same rug) - while praying to the same God - with fellow Muslims, whose eyes were the bluest of blue, whose hair was the blondest of blond, and whose skin was the whitest of white. And in the words and in the actions and in the deeds of the "white" Muslims, I felt the same sincerity that I felt among the black African Muslims of Nigeria, Sudan, and Ghana.

"We were truly all the same (brothers) -- because their belief in one God had removed the "white" from their minds, the 'white' from their behavior, and the 'white' from their attitude.

"I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the Oneness of Man - and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their "differences" in color.

"With racism plaguing America like an incurable cancer, the so-called "Christian" white American heart should be more receptive to a proven solution to such a destructive problem. Perhaps it could be in time to save America from imminent disaster -- the same destruction brought upon Germany by racism that eventually destroyed the Germans themselves.

"They asked me what about the Hajj had impressed me the most. . . . I said, "The brotherhood! The people of all races, color, from all over the world coming together as one! It has proved to me the power of the One God. . . . All ate as one, and slept as one. Everything about the pilgrimage atmosphere accented the Oneness of Man under One God."

"I am and always will be a Muslim. My religion is Islam."

Jeffrey Lang, Professor of Mathematics and Writer, USA

Lang pursued a career in mathematics. He received his master's and doctoral degrees from Purdue University. Lang said that he had always been fascinated by mathematics. "Math is logical. It consists of using facts and figures to find concrete answers," Lang said. "That is the way my mind works, and it is frustrating when I deal with things that do not have concrete answerers." Having a mind that accepts ideas on their factual merit makes believing in a religion difficult because most religions require acceptance by faith, he said. Islam appeals to man's reasoning, he said.

In order to get more information about more new Muslims, look up these sites and get first hand information for yourself:

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (New Muslims)

[www.islamway.com](http://www.islamway.com)

[www.thetrue religion.com](http://www.thetrue religion.com)

Note: In the chapters to come, you will see that the references of certain Qur'anic verses or ahadeeth are given in brackets. The hadeeth (sayings, actions, teachings of the Prophet) have been taken from various books like Muslim, Bukhari, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, etc.

## 2. Let's begin with the basics

Reciting the shahada onwards...

1. A person who wants to become a Muslim has to recite the Shahada, which is the profession of faith stating : "Ash hadu an laa ilaahaa il Allah, wa Ash hadu anna Muhammadur rasool Allah" which means "I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah". He also has to believe in his heart what he says by his tongue.

Some people have a misconception that entering into the Islamic fold requires witnesses, like scholars or elderly, pious individuals, as well as legalizing the conversion by having a legal document. Shaikh Saleh al Munajjid (from Saudi Arabia ) says concerning this: "We wish to clarify that whole matter is very easy and that none of these conditions or obligations are required. For Allah, Almighty, is above all comprehension and knows well the secrets of all hearts. Nevertheless, those who are going to adopt Islam as their religion are advised to register themselves as Muslims with the concerned governmental agency, as this procedure may facilitate for them many matters including the possibility of performing Hajj (Pilgrimage) and Umrah. If anyone has a real desire to be a Muslim and has full conviction and strong belief that Islam is the true religion ordained by Allah for all human beings, then, one should pronounce the Shahada, the testimony of faith, without further delay. The Holy Qur'an is explicit on this regard as Allah announces:

"The Religion in the sight of Allah is Islam" (Qur'an, 3:19)

It is also not a condition for becoming Muslim that a person should know everything about the religion. One can become Muslim and then learn the religion slowly and gradually and develop full conviction about all the rulings of Islam. In the beginning, it is sufficient to believe in the six pillars of faith, which are belief in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day and predestination. A person should also understand and accept the five pillars of Islam. The Prophet said: "Islam is built upon five (pillars): the testimony that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing regular prayer, paying the zakah, Hajj, and fasting Ramadan" (Sahih Bukhari)

Knowledge and conviction develop gradually, and faith increases by doing acts of worship and obedience to Allah, which in turn leads to a deeper understanding and acceptance of the rulings of Islam.

2. The next step for a new revert to Islam is to purify himself by taking a complete bath (ghusl).

3. He/ she should then do his/her best to follow the principles and rules of Islam in totality. It is necessary to disown all forms of polytheism and false beliefs. One should reject evil and be righteous. Such rejection of evil and being righteous is one of the requisites of the motto of Islam. When a person embraces Islam, he has chosen the straight path, and thus must totally submit to God. Allah says in the Qur'an in Surah Baqarah, chapter 2, verse 208:  
"O you who believe! Enter perfectly in Islam"

He must follow that which Allah has commanded and leave that which He has prohibited to inherit the beautiful abode of Paradise. In the beginning, some reverts have difficulties practicing their religion in totality. In this case, they should follow as much as they can, to the best of their ability. When we practice the religion to the best of our abilities, Allah makes things easy for us.

#### 4. Virtue of Salaah (Prayer)

Salaah is the second pillar of Islam.

The five Fardh (obligatory) prayers which are required day and night are:

1. Fajr (early morning, before dawn). It comprises of 2 rak'ahs.
2. Zuhr (mid-day, just after noon). It comprises of 4 rak'ahs.
3. Asr (mid afternoon). It comprises of 4 rak'ahs.
4. Maghrib (just after sunset). It comprises of 3 rak'ahs.
5. Isha (at night, after dark has fallen). It comprises of 4 rak'ahs.

There are also Sunnah prayers such as Qiyaam al-Layl (prayer at night), Taraweeh prayers, two rakahs of Duha prayer, etc. You can learn the correct way to pray from a book called "The Prophet's Prayer" by Nasiruddeen al Albani.

Prayer, whether it is fard or naafil, represents a sincere turning towards Allah alone in all one's affairs. Allah has commanded all the believers to guard strictly the observance of the prayers, as He says:



"Guard strictly (five obligatory) prayers especially the middle Salah (i.e. Asr). And stand before Allah with obedience" (Qur'an, 2:238)

The five daily prayers are obligatory upon every Muslim man and woman, night and day:

"Verily, prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours" (Qur'an, 4:103)

Islam is based on co-operation, brotherhood and love, and Allah has prescribed coming together for these prayers and others, in order to attain these virtues. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Prayer in congregation is twenty-seven times better than prayer offered alone. (Muslim)

Prayer helps the believer at times of hardship and calamity. Allah says: "And seek help in patience and the prayer and truly, it is extremely heavy and hard except for Al-Khaashioon" [i.e. the true believers in Allah] (Qur'an, 2:45)

The five daily prayers wipe out sins, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Do you not think that if there was a river at the door of any one of you, and he were to bathe in it five times each day, would there be any dirt left on him?" Those around him said, "No dirt would be left on him at all". He said, "That is the likeness of the five daily prayers, by means of which Allah erases sin."

Prayer in the mosque is a means of entering Paradise. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever comes and goes to the mosque, Allah will prepare for him a house in Paradise for each time he comes and goes." (Muslim)

Prayer brings the slave and his Creator together. It was the delight of the Messenger (peace be upon him). Whenever any matter grieved him, he would turn to prayer and converse with his Lord and call upon Him, seeking His forgiveness and asking Him of His bounty.

Prayer done with proper humility and fear of Allah brings the Muslim closer to his Lord, and keeps him from doing evil, as Allah says:

"Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book (the Qur'an), and perform the prayer. Verily, the prayer prevents from Al-Fahsha (i.e. great sins of every kind, unlawful sexual intercourse) and evil" (Qur'an, 29:45)

## 5. Importance of paying Zakat

The third pillar: zakah (poor due, charity tax)

Just as Allah has created people with different colours, attitudes and levels of knowledge, so too their deeds and provision vary. He has

made some of them rich and some poor, to test the rich as to whether they show gratitude, and to test the poor as to whether they are patient. Because the believers are a brotherhood, and brotherhood is based on compassion, kindness, love and mercy, Allah has enjoined upon the Muslims zakah which is taken from the rich and given to the poor. Allah says "Take Sadaqah (alms) from their wealth in order to purify them and sanctify them with it, and invoke Allah for them. Verily, your invocations are a source of security for them" (Qur'an, 9:103)

Zakah purifies and cleanses wealth, and purifies the soul from stinginess and miserliness. It strengthens the love between the rich and poor, takes away hatred, makes security prevail and brings happiness to the ummah.

Allah has made the payment of zakah obligatory upon everyone who owns the nisaab (minimum amount) for one year. Whoever pays zakah, Allah expiates his sins thereby, and blesses his wealth, and stores up for him a great reward. Allah says:

"And perform As-Salah and give Zakah, and whatever of good you send forth for yourselves before you, you shall find it with Allah. Certainly, Allah is All-Seer of what you do" (Qur'an, 2:110)

Withholding zakah brings disasters and evils upon the ummah. Allah has threatened those who withhold it with a painful torment on the Day of Resurrection. He says:

"O you who believe! Verily, there are many of the rabbis and the monks who devour the wealth of mankind in falsehood, and hinder (them) from the way of Allah. And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend them not in the way of Allah, announce unto them a painful torment".

Concealing one's zakah is better than paying it openly in front of people, as Allah says

"If you disclose your almsgiving, it is well; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, that is better for you. (Allah) will expiate you some of your sins. And Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do." (Qur'an, 2:271)

When a Muslim pays his zakah, it is not permissible for him to give it to anyone except those whom Allah mentions in the ayah:

"As-Sadaqaat (here it means Zakaah) are only for the Fuqaraa (poor), and Al Masaakeen (the poor) and those employed to collect (the funds); and to attract the hearts of those who have been inclined (towards Islam); and to free the captives; and for those in debt; and

for Allah's Cause and for the wayfarer; a duty imposed by Allah. And Allah is All-Knower, All-Wise" (Qur'an, 9:60)

## 6. Fasting

Fasting means abstaining from things which break the fast, such as food, drink and intercourse, from sunrise until sunset, with the intention of fasting.

The relationship of patience to faith is like that of the head to the body. Allah has enjoined upon this ummah fasting for one month of the year, in order to draw closer to Allah, to avoid that which Allah has forbidden, to get used to being patient, to bring the self under control, to compete in generosity and to demonstrate co-operation and mutual compassion. Allah says "O you who believe! Observing the fast is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become pious" (Qur'an, 2:183)

The month of Ramadan is a great month, in which Allah revealed the Qur'an. The reward for good deeds, acts of charity and acts of worship are multiplied in this month. In it is Laylat al-Qadr, which is better than a thousand months. The gates of heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are shut, and the devils are tied up.

Allah has made fasting the month of Ramadan obligatory upon every sane, adult Muslim, male and female alike, as He says:

"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind and clear proofs for the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong). So whoever of you sights the month (of Ramadan, he must observe Sawm (fasts) that month, and whoever is ill or on a journey, the same number [of days which one did not observe Sawm must be made up] from other days. Allah intends for you ease, and He does not want to make things difficult for you. (He wants that you) must complete the same number (of days), and that you must magnify Allah for having guided you so that you may be grateful to Him." (Qur'an, 2:185)

There is a great reward with Allah for fasting. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Every action of the son of Adam is multiplied, each good deed receiving a tenfold to seven hundredfold reward. Allah said, "Except for fasting, for it is done for Me and I will give a reward for it, for he gives up his desire and food for My sake" (Sahih Muslim)

## 7. Hajj

Allah has given the Muslims a Qiblah (direction of prayer) which they face when they pray and offer supplications wherever they may be. This qiblah is the Ancient House (the Kabah) in Makkah.

Because the Muslims are spread all over the world, and Islam calls people to be united and get to know one another, just as it calls them to co-operate in righteousness and piety, to recommend one another to the truth, to call people to Allah and to venerate the rituals of Allah, hence Allah has made it obligatory for every sane, adult Muslim who has the means, to visit His Ancient House, to circumambulate it and to perform all the rituals of Hajj as explained by Allah and His Messenger. Hajj is an occasion on which the unity of the Muslims, their strength and pride, are made manifest. For the Lord is One, the Book is one, the Messenger is one, the ummah is one, their worship is one and their clothing is one.

Hajj has its own etiquette and conditions which the Muslims must observe, such as restraining their tongues, hearing and sight from all that Allah has forbidden, being sincere in their intentions, using money from good sources (for Hajj), fostering the best attitude, and avoiding everything that could invalidate the Hajj, such as sexual relations, sin or arguing unjustly.

If the Muslim does Hajj correctly, in the manner prescribed and sincerely for the sake of Allah, it will be an expiation for his sins. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever does Hajj for the sake of Allah, and does not have sexual relations or commit sins, will come back (sinless) like the day his mother bore him." (Sahih Bukhari)

(Taken, with modifications, from [www.islam-qa.com](http://www.islam-qa.com))

### *3. In touch with your Creator*

The Qur'an gives no less than 99 different attributes to Almighty Allah and the hundredth one which is the crowning name, is Allah. The Qur'an declares this message:

"Say: Invoke Allah, or invoke the Most Gracious,  
By whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same),  
For to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names." (Qur'an, 17:110)

Some of these beautiful names are:

- Ar-Raheem  
The Merciful, the One who has plenty of mercy for the believers.
- Al-Malik  
The King, the Sovereign Lord, the One with the complete Dominion.
- Al-Quddoos  
The Holy, the One who is pure from any imperfection.
- As-Salaam  
The Source of Peace.
- Al-Muhaimin  
The Protector, the One who witnesses the saying and deeds of His creatures.
- Al-Jabbaar  
The Compeller, the One that nothing happens in His Dominion except that which He willed.
- Al-Mutakabbir  
The Majestic, the One who is clear from the attributes of His creatures and from resembling them.
- Al-Khaaliq  
The Creator, the One who brings everything from non-existence to existence.
- Al-Ghaffaar

The Great Forgiver, the Forgiver, the One who forgives the sins of His slaves time and time again.

- Al-Razzaaq

The Sustainer, the Provider.

- Al-Aleem

The All-knowing, the Knowledgeable; the One nothing is absent from His knowledge.

- As-Samee

The All-Hearing, The Hearer, The One who Hears all things that are heard by His Eternal Hearing without an ear, instrument or organ.

- Al-Baseer

The All-Seeing, The One who Sees all things that are seen by His Eternal Seeing without a pupil or any other instrument.

- Al-Adl

The Just, The One who is entitled to do what He does.

- Al-Haleem

The Forebearing, The Clement, The One who delays the punishment for those who deserve it and then He might forgive them.

- Al-Ghafoor

The All-Forgiving, The Forgiving, The One who forgives a lot.

- Ar-Raqeeb

The Watcher, The Watchful, The One that nothing is absent from Him.

- Al-Mujeeb

The Responsive, The Harkener, The One who answers the one in need if he asks Him and rescues the supplicant when he calls upon Him.

- Al-Hakeem

The Wise, The Judge of Judges, The One who is correct in His doings.

- Al-Wadood

The Loving, The One who loves His believing slaves and His believing slaves love Him.

- Al-Haqq

The Truth, the True.

- Al-Waliyy

The Protecting Friend, the Supporter.

- Al-Mubdi

The Originator.

- Al-Qayyoom

The Self-Subsisting.

- Al-Waahid

The Unique, the One without a partner.

- As-Samad

The Eternal, the Independent.

- Al-Akhir

The Last, The One who's Existence is without an end.

- At-Tawwaab

The Acceptor of Repentance, the Relenting, the One who grants repentance.

- Al-Afuww

The Pardoner, the Forgiver.

- Ar-Ra'uf

The Compassionate, the One with extreme Mercy.

- Al-Ghaniyy

The Self-Sufficient, the One who does not need the creation.

- Al-Haadi

The Guide, the One whom with His Guidance His believers were guided, and with His Guidance the living beings have been guided to what is beneficial for them and protected from what is harmful to them.

- Al-Badi

The Incomparable, the One who created the creation and formed it without any preceding example.

- Al-Baaqi

The Everlasting, the One that the state of non-existence is impossible for Him.

- Ar-Rasheed

The Guide to the Right Path, the One who guides.

- As-Saboor

The Patient.



## *4. Know this man*

If you were a Christian, then believing in this man is adding one more prophet along with the other prophets that you believed in. The only difference is the concept of prophethood in Islam as compared to the church. According to the Bible, prophets commit grave sins, for example, Lut committing incest, Solomon making idols, etc. In Islam, prophets being humans make errors- but not sins, which are prohibited for human beings.

The man we have been talking about is no other than Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who has been prophesized in the Jewish, Christian, as well as Hindu scriptures.

In the Qur'an, Allah makes clear the standard of character of the Messenger in the words: "And you (Muhammad) stand on an exalted standard of character". Aisha, the Prophet's wife, labeled him "the walking Qur'an", because he completely personified its laws and principles.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught the importance of developing moral character through his everyday actions in all aspects of life, which was manifested through his personality. Through his example, we learn that mere teachings and commands of 'do's' and 'don'ts' do not form the foundation of good moral character and personality in a society, because these things alone are not sufficient for developing good qualities in human nature. One has to practice them, follow them and implement them in his/her daily life.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) combined both perfection of creation and perfection of manners. Abu Huraira said: "I have never seen a thing nicer than the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) It seems as if the sunlight were moving within his face. I have never seen one who is faster in pace than the Messenger of Allah. It seemed as if the earth had folded itself up to shorten the distance for him. For we used to wear ourselves out while he was at full ease." (Mishkat Al-Masabeeh 2/518)

Anas said: "I have never touched silk or a silky garment softer than the palm of the Prophet's nor have I smelt a perfume or any scent nicer than his."

Abdullah Ibn Amar says: "The Messenger of Allah was neither ill-mannered nor rude. He used to say that the better people among you are those who are best in their moral character." (Sahih Bukhari)

Anas (the Prophet's slave) says: "I served the holy Prophet for ten years. He never said "Uff" (expressing dissatisfaction), nor did he ever ask me why I did this or did not do that." (Sahih Muslim)

It is also reported by him: "My mother used to hold the Prophet's hand and used to take him wherever she wanted. If any person used to come before him and shake his hand, the Prophet never used to draw away his hand from the other person's hands till the latter drew away his hands, and he never used to turn away his face from that person till the latter himself turned away his face. And in the meetings he was never seen squatting in such a way that his knees were protruding further than his fellow squatters." (Tirmidhi)

Aisha said: "If there were two alternatives, the holy Prophet used to adopt the easiest alternative, provided there was no sin in it. If that work were sinful, then he used to run away farthest from it. The Prophet did not take any personal revenge from any body. Yes, if Allah's command were to be disobeyed, then his wrath was to be stirred. Allah's Messenger did not beat anybody with his own hands, neither his wife nor a servant. Yes, he used to fight in the wars in the cause of Allah." (Sahih Muslim)

Anas narrated: "I was walking with the Prophet. He had wrapped a thick cloth round his body. An Arab pulled the cloth so forcefully that a part of his shoulder could be seen by me, and I was perturbed by this forceful pulling of the cloth. The Arab then said: 'Oh Muhammad! Give me some of my share from the property which Allah has given you.' The Prophet turned towards him and smiled, and gave orders for a donation to be given to him." (Sahih Bukhari)

Can you imagine, when a person pulls your collar with force, leave alone smiling and giving him a gift, would you be able to even restrain your anger?

The Prophet was very cheerful and jovial. Abdullah bin Harith has reported that he did not see anybody smiling more than the Messenger of Allah. (Tirmidhi)

The Prophet was so humble that he would even help in the house. Aisha was asked what the Prophet (peace be upon him) did at home. She replied: "He used to be in the service of his people (at home); and when the time of prayer came he used to perform ablution and go out for prayer" (Sahih Muslim).

Aisha also said that he used to repair his shoes, sew or mend his dress and to do what ordinary men did in their houses. After all, he was a human being like others. Milking the she-sheep and catering for himself were some of his normal jobs.

He was the most modest and the first one to cast his eyes down. Abu Sa'd Al-Khudri said: "He was shier than a virgin in her boudoir. When he hates a thing we read it on his face. (Sahih Bukhari) He does not stare at anybody's face. He always casts his eyes down. He looks at the ground more than he looks sky-wards. His utmost looks at people are glances. He is willingly and modestly obeyed by everybody. He would never name a person whom he had heard ill-news about — which he hated. Instead he would say: 'Why do certain people do so....'"

He never denied a request to anyone. Jabir said: "The Prophet would never deny anything he was asked for." (Sahih Bukhari)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was the most just, the most decent, the most truthful at speech, and the most honest of all. Those who exchanged speech with him, and even his enemies, acknowledged his noble qualities. Even before Prophethood he was nicknamed Al-Ameen (i.e. the truthful, the trustworthy). Even then — in Al-Jahiliyah (In times of ignorance- before he was a prophet) — they used to turn to him for judgement and consultation. In a version by At-Tirmidhi, he says that 'Ali had said that he had been told by Abu Jahl (who was an enemy to the Prophet and hated the prophet bitterly) that he (Abu Jahl) said to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) "We do not call you a liar; but we do not have faith in what you have brought." (Mishkat Al-Masabeeh).

In His Book, Allah the Exalted, said about them:

"It is not you that they deny, but it is the Verses (the Qur'an) of Allah that they (polytheists and wrong-doers) deny." (Qur'an, 6: 33)

Even when Heraclius (a Christian king) asked Abu Sufyan (who had hatred towards Islam and the Prophet): "Have you ever accused him of lying before the ministry of Prophethood?" Abu Sufyan said: "No."

He was most modest and far from being arrogant or proud. He forbade people to stand up at his presence as other people usually do for their kings.

Visiting the poor, the needy and entertaining them were some of his habits. If a slave invited him, he would accept the invitation. He always sat among his friends as if he were an ordinary person of them. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was the most truthful to his pledges, and it is one of his qualities to establish good and steady relationship with his relatives. He was merciful, gentle and amiable to all people. His way of living was the simplest one. Ill-manners and indecency were two qualities completely alien to him. He was decent, and did not call anybody names. He was not the sort of person who cursed or made noise in the streets. He did not exchange offences with others. He pushed back an offence or an error by forgiveness and overlooking. Nobody was allowed to walk behind him (i.e. as a bodyguard). He did not feel himself superior to others not even to his slaves (men or women) as far as food or clothes were concerned.

Loving the poor and the needy and entertaining them or participating in their funerals were things the Prophet (peace be upon him) always observed. He never disgraced a poor man for his poverty. Once he was travelling with his companions and when it was time to have food prepared, he asked them to slaughter a she-sheep. A man said: I will slaughter it, another one said: I will skin it out. A third said: I will cook it. So the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: I will collect wood for fire. They said: "No. We will suffice you that work." The Prophet replied "I know that you can do it for me, but I hate to be privileged. Allah hates to see a slave of his privileged to others." So he went and collected fire-wood.

He entertained his participants in social gatherings alike so that the one addressed would think that there was no one honoured by the Prophet (peace be upon him) but himself. Whoever sat next to him or interrupted him in order to ask for his advice about an affair of his, would be the first to start the talk and the one to end it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) would listen to him patiently till he ended his speech.

Allah thus distinguished Prophet Muhammad in the Qur'an as "a mercy to all the worlds." And truly, he was an amazing human being who walked on the face of this earth 1400 years ago.

## *5. The Life of this world and Beyond*

Have you noticed how a human being is born in the mother's womb? The child comes into this world and is here for a certain period till the angel of death comes and takes the soul away. This process is what we call the cycle of birth and death. It is as if we have been sent here to earth to achieve some goal, some purpose. We are given some time for that purpose and the minute that time period is up, we are taken away.

Everything in life has a purpose. We wear clothes for a purpose, we go to school, college or work for a purpose, we eat for a purpose, we sleep for a purpose, and you are even reading this book for a purpose. Just think about it- each and every thing we do has a purpose. If everything *in* life has a purpose, then definitely life itself would have a purpose.

Allah declares in the Qur'an in chapter 51, verse 56: "I created the jinn and humans only that they might worship Me"

Our real aim in life is to worship our Creator and obey Him. Our aim and goal in life is not to try to look as beautiful or handsome as possible by altering the physical features of our body, it is not to earn as much money as we can, or count how many kilos we have lost and how many we have put on. That's not our aim.

Just look at this human body, notice how it is created. If you have a headache, you pop a pill, the pill goes into your stomach, and your headache is cured. See the network in the body. Look at the variety of animals, flowers and plants- each with a different look, function, sound, way of catching its prey, way of eating, way of walking. Each one is so different from the another. Look at the planets. See how they revolve and rotate so perfectly. Every year, 23<sup>rd</sup> June is the longest day and 23<sup>rd</sup> December is the shortest day. Who manages this punctuality, this perfection? There are signs in each and every creation of Allah. Who tells the cat how to look after her kittens? Who tells the eye to see, and the ear to hear?

Allah says in the Qur'an, "In these things there are signs for people who believe." (Qur'an, 6:99)

Allah has blessed us with so many things. Allah tells us in Surah Ibrahim "If you count the blessings of Allah, never will you be able to

count them" (Qur'an, 14:7). We can't count His blessings because they are so many. If I offer you a glass of water, you will say to me, 'thank you'. But, do you realize that Allah is the One who has created this water? He gives you food to fill your stomachs and clothes to wear. He is the One who has given you a body with two eyes, hands and legs. Not everyone has these blessings. If we thank each other for such small things like a glass of water, don't you think we should thank Allah for giving us so many things which we can't even count?

The way to thank Allah is by obeying Him, by heeding His advice. We have hands and legs, we have eyes to see and ears to hear. So, we don't realize the value of these things. Ask a person who does not have them and he/she will tell you how it is to be deaf, blind or walking with a crutch.

Believers, more important than all these senses put together, is faith. The faith, the iman that Allah has put in your heart. So let's value this blessing and put it to full use by practicing our religion, not just calling ourselves Muslims.

Most of mankind is ungrateful to Allah subhanahu wa tala. If we are able to fill our stomachs with the tastiest and most expensive of dishes, we may be happy for some time, but then again, we are not satisfied- we want more still. We keep wanting more and more. We are greedy. While, on the other side of the street, there are people who are dying to get a piece of bread. So acknowledge Allah's blessings, don't take them for granted.

This life is a test. Allah says in Surah Mulk:  
"He has created death and life to test which of you is best in deeds"  
(Qur'an, 67:2)

Allah has not given good looks and a shapely figure to actors and actresses so that they can mint money in movies or wear bikinis in steamy scenes. It is a test to see if they get distracted or accept the Truth. Allah has not given millionaires a lot of wealth so that they can hoard it up and spend extravagantly. It is a test again. And sadly, the people who use blessings in wrong ways are failing the test. People who take these individuals as ideals and role models are also in danger of failing the test.

Allah knows our nature so well. He says: "Beautified for men is the love of things they covet; women, children, much of gold and silver (wealth), branded beautiful horses, cattle and well-tilled land. This is

the pleasure of the present world's life; but Allah has the excellent return (Paradise) with Him." (Qur'an, 3:14)

If we are stingy with our wealth and don't want to give it to the poor in charity or we are proud and arrogant about it, it's all a test. Allah is testing us with whatever He has given us to see if we still obey Him or not, to see if we get distracted or remain firm on our religion. Allah tells us the reality of this life: "This life is only the enjoyment of deception" (Qur'an, 3:185). Whatever haram act you *think* you are enjoying, is actually a deception. Shaitan is trying to deceive you and you are getting deceived.

Allah then says "And do not extend your eyes toward that which We have given in enjoyment to (some) categories of them (it is only) the splendour of worldly life by which we test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting" (Qur'an, 20:131)

Allah tells those people who are not very well off, that don't wish you had a lot of wealth like the rich among you, don't extend your eyes and long for it, because they have been given wealth to test how they use it. Perhaps, if you were given that wealth, you would not be able to pass the test. Don't wish your father was richer and owned a Mercedes or Porsche. Don't wish your husband earned 50,000 a month. You might not have been the kind of Muslim you are now. If you have iman in your heart, be happy with that because wealth definitely distracts many people. And if you are poor, be patient, because the provision of your Lord in Paradise is better and more lasting than the temporary riches of this world. Most of the people in Paradise will be those who were poor.

Allah asks us "Are you pleased with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But little is the enjoyment of the life of this world as compared to the Hereafter" (Qur'an, 9:38)

When you are pleased with this life rather than the Hereafter, when this life is dearer to you, you are willing to commit any number of sins to achieve what you want in this life. You are willing to sell your faith, your precious iman, at a very small price. But, that's a foolish thing to do because you may enjoy how much you want in this world, but you will have to pay for it in the Hereafter. But if you sacrifice this life for the Afterlife, the happiness and enjoyment will be greater and more lasting. Allah says "the life of this world is nothing but play and amusement. But far better is the house in the Hereafter for those who are pious, will you not then understand?" (Qur'an, 6:32)

Look at the beautiful language of the Qur'an! It is as if Allah is talking to us face to face.

Once, the angel Jibrael came to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and told him "Live how you will, you will certainly die. Love whom you will, you will certainly leave them. Own what you will, it will return to the earth. Do what you will, your deeds will go with you." (Abu Dawud)

How long will we live in this world? Forever? Certainly not. Each one of us will die when his time is up and then we will be returned to our Lord.

This life is a field- what you sow, is what you will reap. Finally one day, this earth will be reduced to dust. All the tall buildings, beautiful houses, expensive cars and other possessions will be a part of that dust to the extent that even our clothes will be among that. We will be resurrected naked on the Day of Judgement. What else will we have with us that day except our deeds!

"Whatever is with you will be exhausted and whatever is with Allah (of good deeds) will remain." (Qur'an, 16:96)

"What is with Allah is better if you did but know" (Qur'an, 16:95)

The Prophet, (peace be upon him) who was sent to humankind, said: "The example of the value of this world compared to that of the Hereafter is as if you dip a finger in to the ocean and then pull it out. See how much water sticks to it" (Sahih Muslim)

Imagine how insignificant and how short this world is as compared to the Hereafter! If you had as much water as there is in the ocean (or even a swimming pool!), and someone came along, dipped his finger and went away, would you even consider asking the person to come back and return that water to you? Of course not! Then how is that we give so much importance to this world and all the luxuries therein?

Iblis (Shaitan) promised Allah that he would take mankind into error and sin. Iblis said, "I shall adorn the path of error for them (mankind) on the earth and I shall mislead them all, except your chosen (guided) slaves among them." (Qur'an, 15:39-40)

Iblis said he would "adorn" the path of error for us, which means that he will make sin dear to us and make us feel that it is extremely pleasurable, and thus he will mislead us to do evil deeds. This is



exactly what is happening to us these days! How many sins are really hateful in our eyes? When we are tempted to commit a sin, do we not find it attractive and enticing? Yes, this is the trick of Shaitan, he makes sin appear pleasurable so that we end up committing it.

Further, the verse informs us that Iblis will be unable to mislead the chosen slaves of Allah. They are the ones who fear Allah, who obey his commands and abstain from his prohibitions. It is not only the saints or pious people who have to obey Allah in totality. It is a responsibility on each and everyone of us, as Allah says: "O you who believe! Enter into Islam perfectly and follow not the footsteps of the Shaitan..." (Qur'an, 2:208)

All believers are commanded to follow Islam completely, whole heartedly, without leaving out a single compulsory act or indulge in prohibited things.

Iblis said: "Surely, I will sit in wait against them (humans) on your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and behind them, from their right and from their left, and You will not find most of them thankful ones." (i.e. they will not be dutiful to you.) (Qur'an, 7:16-17)

Shaitan is sitting in ambush on every path we walk on, waiting to tempt us and allure us to sin. He is trying us to assault us from all sides from left, right, front and back. It is upto us if we allow ourselves to get assaulted or not.

Shaitan challenges: "Verily, I will mislead them and surely, I will arouse in them false desires" (Qur'an, 4:119)

Then, Allah tells us in the next verse, "He (Shaitan) makes promises to them and arouses in them false desires and Shaitan's promises are nothing but deception." (Qur'an, 4:120)

The devil's ultimate goal is to fool us and lead us to Hell fire. He is an open enemy to us, therefore we must take him as our enemy.

A verse of Surah Baqarah reads: "Shaytan threatens you with poverty and orders you to commit evil deeds, whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from himself and bounty." (Qur'an, 2:268)

O believers! Do we you not want forgiveness from our Lord? Then why fall into Shaitan's trap and succumb to his desires?

Allah warns us: "O children of Adam! Let not Shaitan deceive you...Verily, he and his tribe see you from where you cannot see them" (Qur'an, 7:27)

The instant we get an evil thought, we must realise it is from none other than the devil and thus we must drive that thought away and remember our Lord.

"And if an evil whisper comes to you from Shaitan, then seek refuge with Allah...verily, those who are pious, when an evil thought comes to them from Shaitan, they remember and (indeed) they then see(aright)." (Qur'an, 7:200-201)

A good dua to say when you are assaulted by an evil thought is: "Audhu billaahi minash shaytaanir rajeem." which means "I seek refuge in Allah from Satan the accursed."

O brothers and sisters! Is it not better to keep correcting ourselves in this world, while we yet have some time? Or, it will be too late and then it will be no use regretting.

"Close has come to mankind his accounting. Will he still be heedless?" (Qur'an, 21:1)

The Day of Judgement is approaching fast and is very close (many of its signs have already come, as prophesized by Prophet Muhammad(peace be upon him), and many of us ignore it instead of preparing for it.

"O mankind! Fear your Lord and be dutiful to him. Verily, the earthquake of the hour is a terrible thing. The day you shall see it, every nursing mother will forget her nursing and every pregnant one will drop her load, and you shall see mankind as in a drunken state, yet they will not be drunken, but severe will be the torment of Allah." (Qur'an, 22:1-2)

The term of Allah cannot be delayed once it comes. We never know when we shall die- perhaps our end is near. The moment we die, all our chances will be over, and there will be no turning back. Life is only one opportunity, one chance. Therefore, make the best of it!

"But when there comes the greater catastrophe (Day of Judgement) the day when man shall remember what he strove for and hell fire shall be made apparent in full view for (every) one who sees. Then for

him who transgressed all bounds (in evil deeds), and preferred the life of this world (by following his evil desires and lusts) Verily, his abode will be hell fire." (Qur'an, 80: 34-39)

"On that day you shall be asked about the delights (you indulged in, in this world)!" (Qur'an, 102:8)

A final description of the Day of Judgement:

"When the earth is shaken with its (final) earthquake, and when the earth throws out its burdens,

And man will say "What is the matter with it?"

That day it will declare its information (about all that happened over it).

Because your Lord will inspire it.

That day mankind will proceed in scattered groups that they may be shown their deeds.

So whoever does good equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant) shall see it.

And whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom (or a small ant) shall see it." (Qur'an, 99:1-8)

Nothing that day will be hidden from Allah. All secrets will be exposed. Many people have a misconception that as long as they profess their faith in Islam, they are safe from hell fire. However this is not the case and several Qur'anic verses and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) prove this. One verse is the following:

"O you who believe! Ward off yourselves and your families against a fire (hell) whose fuel is men and stones over which are appointed angels stern and severe..." (Qur'an, 66:6)

"On the day when every person will be confronted with all the good he has done, and all the evil he has done, he will wish that there were a great distance between him and his evil. And Allah warns you against himself (His Punishment)..." (Qur'an, 3:30)

On that day we will wish that we had avoided sin, we will wish that we had done far more good deeds.

Allah's Messenger (saw) said: "All my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse." The people around him said 'O Allah's messenger! Who will refuse'? He said, "Whoever obeys me will enter paradise, and whoever disobeys me is the one who refuses (to enter it)." (Sahih Bukhari)

Would any of us willingly refuse to enter the eternal abode of Paradise, by disobeying the commands of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)?

Success in the Hereafter depends on our conduct in our present life. Death is inevitable. We are sure to meet our Lord. How will we face him on the Day of Judgement with our deeds?

Allah tells us: "Has the time not come for the hearts of those who believe (in Islam) to be affected by Allah's reminder (the Qur'an) and that which has been revealed in truth?" (Qur'an, 57:16)

Let's respond fast before time runs out!

There is an extremely consoling verse for sinners who have been away from Allah's religion: "Say O My slaves who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)!

Despair not of the mercy of Allah, Verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is oft- Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Qur'an, 39:53)

We should repent to Allah sincerely and resolve not to fall into sin again. It is also important to start doing good deeds after repentance.

"And whosoever repents and does righteous good deeds; then verily, he repents towards Allah with true repentance." (Qur'an, 25:71).

Allah tells Muhammad(saw) to tell mankind: "Say: If you really love Allah, then follow me. Allah will love you and forgive you your sins." (Qur'an, 3:31)

Our beloved Prophet (saw) said: "The parable of myself and the people is that of a man who starts up a fire. When the fire illuminates his surroundings, moths and other insects that are attracted to the flame start falling into it. He starts taking them out, but they overwhelm him and plunge into it. Likewise, I am pulling you by your coattails away from the fire, but you are rushing right into it." (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) is trying to prevent us from going to Hell-fire but if we do not obey him, it will be as if we are rushing into hell-fire and are calling for destruction on ourselves.

No human being is perfect. All of us have some faults and bad characteristics, even if they are a few. Why not give all these up for

the sake of Allah? Each and every one? You can at least start by trying.....

Let us not be fooled by Shaitan. We have a more important goal to achieve- Paradise. Won't we sacrifice this short, temporary phase of life on earth, for eternal happiness in Paradise? When Allah is calling us closer to Islam, why shouldn't we respond? After all, isn't it for our own good?

## *6. A Peep into Paradise*

What if you could get a place where there was all that you wanted and desired? Where not a single wish would remain unfulfilled and your dreams would turn into reality?

And, to top it all, what if you were told that you could live like this forever? Can you imagine how happy and elated you would be?

And what if someone gave you the secret keys to enter this place? Once you had those keys in your hand, your seat in this wonderful place was booked.

Would you have the least hesitation in taking those keys?

This wonderful place is none other than Paradise. The secret keys are all that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent with. If you follow the teachings and abide by the laws, you have got hold of the secret keys, God willing.

This world is merely a path, a bridge that leads us to the Hereafter. We are travelers in this world and our destination is the afterlife. So, it would be logical for any human being to realize that he should give importance to that which lasts, which is eternal over what is temporary and what will be destroyed. This world is like a drop of water in the ocean compared to the afterlife, which is the ocean itself. Enjoyment and pleasures in this world are fleeting. Time flies so fast. Before you know it, you are already all grown up and you look back to those youthful years, which will never return.

When one especially sees the beauty in Paradise and the wonderful life a believer will have, there is a strong determination to work towards this blissful abode.

There are many verses in the Qur'an as well as saheeh hadeeth which speak about paradise. Some of which are:

"The description of Paradise which the Muttaqoon have been promised is that in it are rivers of water, the taste and smell of which are never changed. Rivers of milk the taste of which will remain unchanged. Rivers of wine that will be delicious to those who drink from it and rivers of clear, pure honey. For them will be every kind of fruit and forgiveness from their Lord." (Qur'an, 47:15)

"And their recompense shall be Paradise, and silken garments, because they were patient. Reclining on raised thrones, they will see there neither the excessive heat of the sun, nor the excessive bitter cold, (as in Paradise there is no sun and no moon). The shade will be close upon them, and bunches of fruit will hang low within their reach. Vessels of silver and cups of crystal will be passed around amongst them, crystal-clear, made of silver. They will determine the measure of them according to their wishes. They will be given a cup (of wine) mixed with Zanjabeel, and a fountain called Salsabeel. Around them will (serve) boys of perpetual youth. If you see them, you would think they are scattered pearls. When you look there (in Paradise ) you will see a delight (that cannot be imagined), and a Great Dominion. Their garments will be of fine green silk and gold embroidery. They will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a pure drink." (Qur'an, 76:12-21)

"And those foremost (In Tawheed and obedience to Allah and His Messenger in this life) will be foremost (in Paradise ). They will be those nearest to Allah in the Gardens of Delight. A multitude of those (the foremost) will be from the first generation (who embraced Islam) and a few of those (the foremost) will be from the later (generations). They will be reclining, face to face, on thrones woven with gold and precious stones. They will be served by immortal boys, with cups and jugs, and a glass from the flowing wine, from which they will have neither any headache, nor any intoxication. They will have fruit from which they may choose, and the flesh of fowls that they desire. There will be Houris with wide, lovely eyes (as wives for the pious), like preserved pearls, a reward for deeds that they used to do. They will hear no vain or sinful speech (like backbiting, etc.) but only the saying of: Salam, Salam, (greetings of peace). And those on the Right Hand, who will be those on the Right Hand? They will be among thorn-less lote-trees among Talh (banana trees) with fruits piled one above another, in long-extended shade, by constantly flowing water, and fruit in plenty, whose season is not limited, and their supply will not be cut off. They will be on couches or thrones raised high. Verily, We have created for them (maidens) of equal age, loving (their husbands only). For those on the Right Hand." (Qur'an, 56:10-38)

"Verily, the dwellers of Paradise that Day, will be busy in joyful things. They and their wives will be in pleasant shade, reclining on thrones. They will have therein fruits (of all kinds), and all that they will ask for. (It will be said to them): "Salamun" (Peace be on you), a Word from the Lord, Most Merciful." (Qur'an, 36:55-58)

Can you imagine wearing the finest silk clothing and sitting on couches made of gold and precious stones?

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The people of Paradise will look at the dwellers of lofty mansions (i.e. a superior place in Paradise) in the same way as one looks at a brilliant star, far away in the East or in the West of the horizon. This is because of their superiority over one another (in reward)." One of the people asked, "O Allah's Messenger, are these lofty mansions for the Prophets which no one else can reach?"

The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "No! By Allah, in whose Hands is my life, these are for men who believe in Allah and also believe in the Messenger." (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Verily, for the believers in Paradise, are tents made of a single hollow pearl. The length of which would be sixty miles long from all sides, their wives being therein. The believer will go around them (i.e., visit them) and they will not be able to see each other." (Sahih al-Jami)

Abu Hurairah said that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "There is not a tree in Paradise, except that its trunk is made of gold." (Sahih al-Jami)

Anas ibn Malik narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Verily in Paradise there is a market in which (the inhabitants of Paradise) will come to every Friday. The North wind will blow and scatter fragrances on their faces and on their clothes. This will add to their beauty and their attractiveness. They will then go back to their families after having an added luster to their beauty and their attractiveness. Their families will say to them, 'By Allah you have increased in beauty and loveliness after leaving us,' and they will say, 'By Allah you too have increased in beauty and attractiveness after us.'" (Sahih Muslim)

Anas ibn Malik said that Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) said, "I entered Paradise and found myself by a river, by its edges were tents of pearls. Then I tapped with my hands where the water was running, and there was then a beautiful smell of musk. I asked, 'What is this O Jibrael?' He said, 'This is Kawthar (river in Paradise) which Allah has given to you.'" (Sahih al-Jami)



After reading all this, you must have conjured a mental picture about Paradise and how wonderful it is. But, you will be surprised to know that Paradise is more beautiful than even what you imagine.

Allah says "So no soul knows the delights of the eyes which is hidden for them; a reward for what they did." (Qur'an, 32:17)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Allah said: "I have prepared for My pious slaves things which have never been seen by an eye, nor heard by a ear, or imagined by a human being." (Sahih Bukhari)

We can't even imagine how beautiful Paradise will be! It is beyond imagination!

### Who are the inhabitants of Paradise ?

"They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds, and those are among the good." (Qur'an, 3:114)

Of the believers, He also says, "But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the Garden: Therein shall they abide (forever)." (Qur'an, 2:82)

Not everyone who recites the Shahadah will enter Paradise. The Shahadah means and requires more than the mere utterance of it. The essence of faith is deed. Only those who fear Allah as He ought to be feared, and are motivated by that fear to do acts of righteousness will attain success. The one who is conscious of His Lord, in every aspect of his life, and turns to Him in true submission, will have purchased for himself safety and security on a day, when there will be none, except with Allah.

We must also avoid bid'ah and innovations, and we must carry out all compulsory acts of worship that Allah has prescribed. Once we are patient and regular in what is compulsory, we can then proceed to the next level of faith and worship, by doing the things that we have been encouraged to do. By increasing our acts of worship, and remembrance of Allah, we will leave off sin and help safeguard ourselves from a Fire, the fuel of which is men and stones.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said, "The most common thing which leads people to Paradise is fear of Allah and good conduct, and

the most common thing which leads people to the Hell Fire is the mouth and the private parts." (Tirmidhi)

Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) also said, "All of my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse." It was asked, "O Messenger of Allah, who would refuse?" He said, "He who obeys me enters Paradise and he who disobeys me has refused." (Sahih Bukhari)

Repentance erases what came before it as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The one who repents from sin is like the one who never sinned." (Sahih Al-Jami)

And Allah says, "Except such as repent and believe and do good, these shall enter the Garden, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly in any way." (Qur'an, 19:60)

At the same time, always hope for Allah's mercy. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said "Musa, (peace be upon him) asked his Lord, 'Who amongst the inhabitants of Paradise will be the lowest in rank?' He (Allah) said, 'He is a man who will come after the people have entered Paradise and it will be said to him: Enter Paradise.' He will say, 'How my Lord? Indeed, the people have settled in their apartments and taken their shares.' It will be asked of him, 'Would you be pleased if there was a kingdom for you like the kingdoms of the earth?' He will say, 'I would be pleased, my Lord.' He will say, 'And for you is the like of that, and the like of it, and the like of it.' He will say at the fifth time, 'I am pleased, my Lord.' He will say, 'This is for you and ten times like it, and for you is what you desire for yourself and what is pleasurable to your eye.' He will say, "I am pleased my Lord." (Sahih Muslim)

This is what Allah has for the least among us. But despite all the wonderful things in Paradise, Allah still has in store for the believers the greatest honor awaiting them...

Suhaib ibn Sinan narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "When the inmates of Paradise enter Paradise and the inmates of Hellfire will enter Hell, the announcer will say, 'O people of Paradise, verily you have a promise with Allah and He wishes to fulfill His promise to you.' They will ask, 'What is His promise? Has He not made our balances heavy (with good deeds), whitened our faces, admitted us into Paradise, and delivered us from the Hellfire?' Then the screen will be removed and they will look towards Him. By Allah He will not give them a thing more beloved to them and more comforting to their eyes, than the gaze of Himself." (Sahih al-Jami)

Allah says, "And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it as he ought to strive and he is a believer; (as for) these, their striving shall surely be accepted." (Qur'an, 17: 19)

## *7. Qualities of Good Believers*

We must be not just Muslims, but we must strive to be those believers whom Allah loves, those who earn His forgiveness, and those whom Allah will admit into Paradise. Some of the characteristics of good believers, whom Allah has praised, are mentioned in the Qur'an:

- They believe and do righteous deeds (2: 25)
- They fear Allah (3: 15)
- They spend in Allah's cause in times of ease and hardship (3: 134)
- They control their anger (3: 134)
- They are patient (76: 12)
- They forgive people (3: 134)
- After they do evil and wrong themselves, they remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sin (3: 135)
- They do not persist in doing a wrong action, while knowing that it is wrong (3: 135)
- They obey Allah and His Messenger (47: 33)
- They pray with humility and submissiveness (5: 12)
- They are truthful (5: 119)
- They strive in the cause of Allah (17: 19)
- They humble themselves before their Lord (11: 23)
- They repent for their sins (19: 60)
- They are faithfully true to their duties and keep promises (23: 8)
- They strictly guard their prayers (23: 9)
- They compete with one another in doing good deeds (35: 32)

- They say "our Lord is Allah" and then stand firm in their faith. (46:13)
- They are heedful (47:15)
- They follow Islam completely and whole heartedly (2:208)
- They remember Allah often (33:35)
- They ask for Allah's forgiveness before the dawn (51:18)
- They always keep their word and fear a day whose evil will spread far and wide (76:7)
- They enjoin the right and forbid the wrong (9:112)
- Their hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah (13:28)
- They are modest and guard their chastity (23:5)
- They do not have doubts about their faith (49:15)
- They recommend one another to truth and patience (103:3)
- They give food, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives (76:8)
- When an evil thought comes to their minds, they remember Allah and see clearly (7:200-201)

Allah says: "Anyone, be it man or woman, who performs honourable deeds, and is a believer, they will enter the Paradise and not be harmed a speck." (Qur'an, 4:126)

When we know that something which we are engaged in is haram in Islam, we must leave the sin immediately, without putting forth any excuses, as Allah says: "It is not fitting for a believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His messenger to have any option about their decision: if anyone disobeys Allah and His messenger he is indeed on a clearly wrong path." (Qur'an, 33:36)

## *8. Strengthening your faith*

Faith increases and decreases. When you sat and thought about the beauty of Allah's creation or pondered over a verse of the Qur'an, you might have noticed that your faith increased.

It is essential to keep our faith strong. Faith wears out the way clothes wear out, so we must ask Allah to renew the faith in our hearts. Some ways by which you can increase your faith are:

1. Stick to original Islam. Be careful of falling prey to opinions and inventions by various sects. This is an extremely important issue, because the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:  
"My Ummah will be divided into seventy-three sects, and all of them will be in Hell fire except one" The companions asked Allah's messenger which group that would be, where upon he replied, "It is the one to which I and my companions belong." (Tirmidhi)

The Islam that our Prophet came with was one religion. If we follow strictly what he said, with Allah's permission, we will be rightly guided. This section provides a list of authentic books, websites and scholars that you can refer to. At least in the beginning, it is preferable to avoid visiting random websites and reading everything you may think is Islam, because you may not be able to decipher truth from falsehood (which is dangerous again).

2. Stay away from sins as much as possible. Don't get deceived by Shaytan. Be alert and aware. Every time you want to sin, know he's around.

If there's a particular place Shaytan always tries to get you- that soft spot- then, pinpoint that spot and guard yourself against it. Let me be more precise. We all know that we must not only obey our elders (parents, grandparents, etc.) but also be nice and kind to them. We can't show the least amount of disrespect to our parents. However, it might be that even after knowing all these things, we sometimes get allured by Shaytan and thus, we say something that we really shouldn't. It's much later that we realise and repent and.....sometimes, commit the same old sin again. What's the remedy? If this is the problem you face, and being nice and kind to parents is the soft spot for you, then:

Write down all the Qur'anic verses you know about being good to parents, as well as the hadeeth on the topic. If you don't get many,

search. Look up the index in the Qur'an, or everytime you go through it, make a note of the verses you need for this purpose. Do the same for hadeeth. In addition, you can go through motivating and informative books like "Bulugh ul Maram" by Al Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al Asqalani and "Riyadh us Saliheen" by Imam Nawawi. They have good matter on manners, etiquettes, etc. So, taking the example above, you can have the following list:

"And We (Allah) have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his parents..." (Qur'an, 29:8)

"And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour. And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility..." (Qur'an, 17:23-24)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said "The best of you is the one who is the best to his family." (Tirmidhi)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said that the major sins are "associating something with Allah, disobeying one's parents and causing them pain or injury, killing someone unlawfully and giving false evidence." (Sahih Bukhari)

"...And We have made some of you as a trial for others; will you have patience? And your Lord is Ever All- Seer." (Qur'an, 25:20)

"If an evil impulse from Satan provokes you, seek refuge in Allah.. As for those who guard against evil, when they are bothered by visitors from Satan, they remember and immediately see (clearly)." (Qur'an, 7:200-201)

Go through your list several times, so you get really familiar. The best thing is to try and learn the list.

Now:

Whenever you are in that situation (in this case, with your parents, and Shaytan whispers to you, telling you to shout or disrespect them), all you have to do is recall the verses and hadeeth that you have learnt. Recall them- slowly. Tell yourself what you are doing is haram. Tell yourself Shaytan is making you do this. Recall the good deeds you will obtain if you refrain from the sin. And InshaAllah those evil

thoughts will go away in a jiffy. If they still don't, try harder, and recall the verses. This constitutes remembering Allah.

Apply this principle for every sin you commit time and again, whether it be disobeying parents, getting angry easily, or missing your salah. Just apply it, and you'll see the difference, if Allah wills!

3. Do all your fardh acts like prayer, fasting, zakat, hijab, etc. don't compromise on a single one of them. In addition, try to do as many good deeds as you can, especially an extraordinary good deed. For example, in addition to day to day good deeds, take on a big task like sponsoring an orphan, paying for the education of a poor child, paying off someone's debt, etc.

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "I and the one who sponsors an orphan will be like this in Paradise" and he gestured with his forefinger and middle finger, holding them slightly apart." (Sahih Bukhari)

Some others could include arranging lectures and talks on Islam, inviting the poor to your house, feeding them and talking to them, visiting old age homes and talking to the inmates, helping widows- regarding which the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The one who strives to help widows and the poor is like the one who strives in jihad for the sake of Allah and the one who prays at night and the one who fasts during the day" (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Allah has made all of us different. One person may be scared to talk to people about Islam and doing dawah, fearing their reaction. Another may be tempted to hoard up wealth and not spend in the way of Allah. A third may feel lazy to offer Salah. These are all weaknesses that differ from individual to individual. So, it may be very hard for you to do something, but extremely easy for another person to do the same thing. If you take up the challenge, and do that one thing that keeps wavering in your mind, that you keep postponing every time, and be constant in doing it, just watch the miracle- your faith will increase by leaps and bounds. You will feel success. That's because you have overcome that big hurdle which kept you back, and now you are only concerned about your Lord and being obedient to Him. You are confident of your choices and the path you follow.

Allah says in Surah Baqarah, chapter 2, verse 208:

"O you who believe! Enter into Islam perfectly, and follow not the footsteps of Shaytan. Verily, he is to you an open enemy."



We are commanded by our Lord to enter perfectly, completely, whole heartedly into Islam, not neglecting any commandment and fulfilling all duties.

You can put in more effort for doing common good deeds, like prayer, for example. If you do not pray tahajjud (nightly prayer), then try to start praying. Perform nawafil salah, over and above your sunnah. The more you perform encouraged and optional acts, the closer you get to Allah.

The Prophet said: Allah said: "My slave continues getting closer to Me by performing voluntary deeds until I love him." (Sahih Bukhari)

Allah said, "I am as My slave thinks I am. I am with him when he makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself. I make mention of him to Myself and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it." (Sahih Bukhari).

4. Remember Allah (dhikr Allah) whenever you can; be it in the bus, car, when you're lying down, walking, waiting for someone... just ANYWHERE.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "Allah says: "I am with My servant when he remembers Me and his lips move in My remembrance." (Sahih Bukhari)

You can learn a lot of du'as, like the du'a for going out of the house, du'a while wearing clothes, du'a for entering the mosque, etc. which are all compiled in a book called "Fortification of the Muslim through remembrance and supplication from the Qur'an and Sunnah" by al Saeed Ibn Ali Ibn Wahf Al- Qahtani.

5. Read the translation of the Qur'an everyday. Completing one juz per day is ideal, but you can do more or less than that depending on your schedule for the day. (You can make a time table for this)

6. Read authentic books on Islam, like the Prophet's biography and the stories of his companions. An excellent book to clear out any more existing misconceptions about Islam is "20 most common questions asked by non Muslims" by Dr Zakir Naik. Two others are "The True Message of Jesus Christ" by Bilal Philips and "The Ideal Muslim" (for males), "The Ideal Muslimah" (for females) both authored by Muhammad al Hashimi.

7. Keep small books with you and read them wherever you go, so you don't waste your precious time.

8. You can surf the net, but don't get addicted. Here is a list of websites that can be useful in gaining knowledge:

[www.islamtoday.com](http://www.islamtoday.com)

[www.irf.net](http://www.irf.net)

[www.islam-qa.com](http://www.islam-qa.com)

[www.alhudapk.com](http://www.alhudapk.com) (mainly Urdu)

[www.fatwaonline.com](http://www.fatwaonline.com)

[www.discoverislam.co.in](http://www.discoverislam.co.in)

9. Listen to CDs and watch DVDs of Islamic talks by authentic scholars. Some of the scholars who are authentic are Ahmed Deedat, Bilal Philips, Jamal Badawi, Abdur Rahim Green, Zakir Naik, Yusuf Estes, Salem al Amry, Hussain Yee, Shabbir Ally, Yasir Qadhi, Khalid Yaseen etc. You can type these names in a search engine and listen to their talks online, inshaAllah.

10. Attend Islamic lectures and gatherings where you meet other Muslims/ Muslimahs and reverts like you. This will give you a lot of moral and emotional support. Make a 'revert group' and meet regularly to discuss your problems and other concerns. You can include someone who has good knowledge of Islam to help you with the struggles of life.

11. Keep good company. Have friends who are pious, who will help you in righteousness. Or, you would come sliding down the ladder of piety- even if you read books and engage in other activities. The Prophet made this very clear:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "A man follows the religion of his friend; so each one should consider whom he makes his friend."  
(Abu Dawud)

There is a great difference between good friends and bad friends:  
"The example of a good companion and a bad one is the bearer of musk and the worker on the bellows. A bearer of musk would give you some, you might buy some from him, or you might enjoy the fragrance of his musk. The worker on the bellows, on the other hand, might spoil your clothes with sparks from his bellows, or you get a bad smell from him." (Sahih Muslim)

It's normally better to have a friends circle where you meet regularly to discuss Islamic matters, ask each other questions on Islam, see

how much the others have learnt in the past week, etc. This would encourage and motivate you to learn more, and faster. You could also have a kind of common goal, like all of you memorizing the last juz of the Qur'an within 3 months, or the like. Always keep away from those who have a bad influence on you, those who prompt you to do evil and try to get you away from Islamic teachings. Be very choosy about whom you associate with.

11. Command good and forbid evil. The Qur'an says "Help you one another in virtue and righteousness, but do not help one another in sin and transgression." (Qur'an, 5:2)

"(The believers whose lives Allah has purchased are) those who repent to Allah, who worship Him, who praise Him, who fast, who bow down (in prayer), who prostrate, who enjoin (people) for good and forbid (people) from evil, and who observe the limits set by Allah (do all that Allah has ordained and abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which Allah has forbidden). And give glad tidings to the believers." (Qur'an, 9:112)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "If any one of you comes across an evil, he should try to stop it with his hand (using force), if he is not in a position to stop it with his hand then he should try to stop it by means of his tongue (meaning he should speak against it). If he is not even able to use his tongue then he should at least condemn it in his heart. This is the weakest degree of faith" (Sahih Muslim)

If your family member or friend is planning to do some good deed, assist him/her in doing it, even if she/he has not directly asked for your help. Well, this part is kind of easy. What seems difficult is forbidding evil. That's because you may have to stand up to people, oppose them, and say things they do not believe as true. But, yes, believers, that's our duty.

If a close friend, or anyone else, wants you to help him/her, and you know it's against one of the tenets of Islam, then you must explain nicely why you are not allowed to do it, and, of course, not end up helping that friend.

12. After you become familiar with Islam, it's now time to help other reverts who were just like you. Help them learn and grow in your company. Encourage them and support them in the ways you can. Remember, it's continuous charity, and you are rewarded even after your death.

## *9. Getting familiar with Islamic terms*

Here are a few Islamic terms that you can use regularly, in conversation and otherwise. You must have heard your Muslim friends using some of these terms.

Assalaamu alaikum: It means "peace be upon you". It is the greeting one Muslim should offer another. The reply is 'wa alaikum assalaam' which means 'and peace be upon you'. The fuller version reads, 'assalaamu alaikum wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatuhu' which means 'peace be upon you and the mercy and blessings of Allah', and the reply is 'wa alaikum assalaam wa rahmatullaahi wa barakaatuhu'

Sallallaahu alayhi wassallam: It means "peace be upon him". It is said after making mention of Prophet Muhammad (sallaallaahu alayhi wassallam).

Bismillaah: It means "in the name of Allah". It can be said before starting any act. It is compulsory to say it before eating and drinking.

InshaaAllaah: It means "if Allah wills". This is usually said when referring to a situation in the future e.g. inshaAllah I will go to the market tomorrow.

Subhaan Allah: It means "glory be to Allah". It is an expression used to express strong feelings of joy or relief.

Alhamdulillah: It means "praise be to Allah". In everyday speech it simply means "Thank God!". When one is asked "how are you?" the reply can be "alhamdulillah, im fine". It is also said after sneezing.

Astaghfirullaah: It means "I seek Allah's forgiveness". This is an expression used by a Muslim when he wants to ask Allah forgiveness.

Allaahu akbar: It means "Allah is the Greatest" It is used in times of happiness or shock.

Maashaa Allaah: It means "what Allah wishes". It indicates appreciation for an aforementioned individual or event. For example, I get an A in a test, my mother would say MashaAllah.

Jazaaka Allaahu khairan: It means "may Allah reward you with good". This is a statement of thanks and appreciation to be said to a person who does you a favour. Instead of saying 'shukran' (thanks), this phrase is used.

Innaa lillaahi wa innaa ilayhi rajioon: This is something which a Muslim expresses when he is afflicted by a misfortune, the meaning of which is "We are from Allah and to Him are we returning." It is taken from a verse from the Qur'an (2:156).  
[It is usually said upon hearing the death of an individual]

Ameen: It means "O Allah, accept this". It is said after a dua (supplication) to Allah.

## *10. Under Pressure*

There is no living human who can confidently say he/she has got no problems in life. Some may be comparatively happier than others, but each and every one of us goes through hardships. Reverts, like others, also have their share of hardship. Taken a little optimistically (and practically), reverts get an opportunity, or rather hundreds of opportunities and chances to earn good deeds through patience. It may seem like I'm turning the whole thing around- you'd say "those are really hard times!" Yes, it's hard for sure, but you won't believe what great reward there is for it! And, if you compare the hardship with the great reward, it won't even stand an inch. Therefore, I say it's a huge opportunity, for tea leaves only show how strong they are when you put them into hot water. Your hot water may seem really burning right now, but when it cools down and life is over, you will be all ready to enter Paradise! InshaAllah.

### Succumbing to pressure

Many reverts are confronted with situations in which there is a lot of pressure from people around. Following Islam completely, at such times, appears difficult. Such situations crop up at any time: at a social function, a holiday trip, or something as simple as dinner at a restaurant. The difficulty lies here: some things that people do as customary may be a big sin for us Muslims. People won't understand why we are avoiding them or those situations. Some may even force us upto a point. It gets especially tough when the activity is connected to the strong belief/ custom of a particular set of people. Take the example of the last rites that a Muslim boy is expected to perform for his disbelieving father. How does a revert manage such a crucial situation?

There is no doubt that it is Allah who knows what is in our hearts and He will judge our actions based on our intention. We get this from the Prophet's saying: 'Actions will be judged according to their intentions.' (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

However, we must learn to take a stand. Many of us get weak and fall prey to the devil's plots at the drop of a hat. When we know we are right in our beliefs, we must learn to stand up for the Truth that we follow. We must learn to battle it out in rough weather and not give in. If we work hard to avert forbidden actions, only then will Allah's help

come. Allah knows each of our capacities very well, but He wants us to strive.

Allah tells us: "And strive hard in Allah's Cause as you ought to strive" (Qur'an, 22:78)

He is the Most Merciful who forgives sins repeatedly, but He wants us to work a little harder to achieve that high status in Paradise. Allah says He will surely guide those who strive in His cause:

"As for those who strive hard in Us (Our Cause), We will surely guide them to Our Paths. And verily, Allah is with the good doers" (Qur'an, 29:69)

In order to inherit Paradise, sacrifice and striving are necessary: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Hell is hidden behind (evil) desires and Paradise is screened by difficult striving." (Sahih Bukhari)

There is no overburdening oneself in religion, but we must try our level best to avoid getting involved in anything that Allah has declared to be haram. This is what our Lord will see- how much we tried to abstain from sins in the face of a storm. How much we strived. And if we don't strive in the first place, how many excuses can we keep giving ourselves and the people around us? Does not Allah know what our hearts conceal? Is not *He* the One who will take our accounting?

When we are suddenly confronted with a life or death situation, it's not easy to be firm. You can't score well in a tough exam unless you're prepared. So that's what we need to do- prepare. Prepare, so that you will be strong when the need arises, Insha Allah. Constantly work on your faith by reading books, listening to lectures and keeping good company. If you slip, repent and make amends. Working on yourself in this manner is a type of jihad (striving) and emigrating from what is bad, for which there are enormous rewards.

The Prophet said:

"The best of the Believers with respect to Islam is the one from whose hand and tongue the Muslims are safe; and the best of the Believers with respect to Iman are the most excellent of them in character; and the best of those who migrate is he who migrates from that which Allah the Most High has prohibited; and the best of Jihad is when one strives against his soul for the sake of Allah, the Mighty, the Magnificent." (Tabarani)

If we keep doing jihad with our soul, Satan will have a hard time trying to drift us away from our place in Paradise, and he will be unable to harm our bond with Allah. Along with striving, we must pray to Allah to make things easy for us and help us crumble the biggest and hardest of boulders that come in our way. Remember, the wind can blow down a tender twig, but not a sturdy tree.

### Is it really *that difficult*?

Many events in our lives seem so difficult that we wonder how we will carry on. How will we overcome this mighty barrier?  
The ocean is so vast, how will we get to a safe place when there is no land even in sight?

One of the main reasons why we feel we cannot take it anymore is because of our demand for an ideal, rosy life. We feel things should and must go the way we want, if we wish for something we *must* have it, and if we don't, we can't bear it.

There is no doubt that every one of us would want an easy life, without struggles and hassles. But for those who make this wish a necessity and a need, things become very hard for them. We just need to accept that life is going to be a rough road. Thorns *will* prick us along the way. People *will* throw stones at us. And these things *are* going to grieve us. So what?

Your parents may not listen every time you tell them about Islam. They may get angry too. Your seniors may not readily accept you with the beard or the jilbab. They might want someone more "broad minded".

Allah tells us that whatever happens to us has already been written down as part of our destiny before we were even born: "No calamity befalls on the earth or in yourselves but is inscribed in the Book of Decrees, before We bring it into existence. Verily, that is easy for Allah. In order that you may not be sad over matters that you fail to get, nor rejoice because of that which has been given to you." (Qur'an, 57:22-23)

"... When you ask for anything ask it from Allah, and if you seek help in Allah. Know that if the people were to unite to do you some benefit they could benefit you only with what Allah had recorded for you, and that if they were to unite to do you some injury they could injure you



only with what Allah had recorded for you. The pens are withdrawn and the pages are dry." (Tirmidhi)

If we expect a comfortable life on earth, what is Paradise for? If we get all our reward in this life, what can we look forward to in Paradise? Surely, in order to obtain a reward, some sacrifice is necessary. Some struggle, some striving. It's not the case that no matter how much you strive, your reward is the same. The harder you work, the better and greater is your reward. There are grades even in Paradise; the highest of which is Jannat al Firdous. We can always aim to achieve more; Allah's bounty is great and His reward is immense!

In the example that we quoted above, about a Muslim son performing the last rites of his disbelieving father, this situation might be a very difficult one for many. But do you know that a similar event had taken place in the life of Ali, the Prophet's cousin? And here is how he responded to it:

Ali ibn Abi Taalib said: "I said to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), 'Your old, misguided uncle has died (he was referring to his father Abu Taalib). Who will bury him?' He said, 'Go and bury your father.'" said, 'I will not bury him, for he died as a mushrik.' He said, 'Go and bury him, then do not do anything until you come to me.' So I went and buried him, then I came to him with traces of dust and earth on me. He told me to wash myself, then he made du'a for me in words that were more precious to me than everything on earth." (al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, by al Albani)

Ali initially refused to bury his father because he died as a mushrik. However, when the Prophet (peace be upon him) repeated the command to bury his father (without taking part in the rites or following the body), he hastened to obey him and he gave up the notion that had initially occurred to him. This is what obedience means: that a person gives up his opinion in response to the command of his Prophet (peace be upon him)

Do you see how strong the early Muslims were? We would be looking for a way in between, whereby we could say that Islam allows this action and satisfy our relatives. But the only concern of Ali was that his father was a disbeliever, so how could he attend the funeral? He started with this statement itself. Only after the Prophet allowed it, did he attend the funeral.

While for Ali, the matter was just a "yes or no" to attend the funeral or not, for us, we may be in a dilemma about what to do, how to avoid,

what to say, what will happen if I don't go... it's ruminating about such things that adds to stress. If it is haram, its haram, and it must be avoided. If it's allowed, we may do it. Thinking on and on about the future consequences and worrying about them will do no good. Take a decision and then leave it up to Allah. It may not be as difficult as you perceive it to be.

### Changing our perception

A great portion of worry emerges because we are greatly concerned with this world. We must realize that wealth and happiness will not come to us by chasing this materialistic world. In fact, the Prophet said it's the other way around. If we keep our focus on the Hereafter, then Allah will make us wealthy in the true sense.

The Prophet said: 'Wealth does not come from having great riches; (true) wealth is contentment of the soul.' (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) also said: "Whoever sets this world as his goal, Allah divides his affairs for him. He will place poverty between his eyes, and nothing will come to him from this world except what Allah has written for him. Whoever sets the Hereafter as his goal, Allah gathers his affairs for him, gives him richness of the heart and the world will come to him grudgingly and submissively." (Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban)

Whatever we have just does not seem enough. Increased salaries, luxurious items... but we still want more! That's man's greedy nature. We can never be happy this way because no matter how much we have, we're not satisfied. How much can we amass? And finally, none of that will go with us when we die. So *what are we amassing all this wealth for?* If we really want to be wealthy, we can achieve this by being content and satisfied with all that we have. One way of feeling grateful for Allah's favours is by looking at those who have less than us.

The Prophet said: 'Contemplate those who have less than you and not those who have more than you, lest you belittle the favours of Allah conferred upon you'. (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

There will *always* be someone who has less than us. But we will only realize this when we stop complaining and moaning, and start looking around us.

Glad tidings to all the believers! There is good for us in this world and good for us in the Hereafter.

The prophet said: "Strange are the ways of a believer for there is good in every affair of his and this is not the case with anyone else except in the case of a believer for if he has an occasion to feel delight he thanks [Allah], thus there is a good for him in it, and if he gets into trouble and shows resignation (and endures it patiently), there is good for him in it." (Sahih Muslim)

Everything that happens to you is for your own good. You just need to exercise patience in the case of an adversity and be thankful in times of ease. So be positive, always. Look for good in everything that you have, whether in the course of your life, or in personal relationships.

Another remedy suggested by the Prophet, is to remember death often. When we feel distressed, when we are enveloped by grief and sorrow, and we recall the temporary nature of this life, that we are not here for long, that we are going to die one day, it gives us a feeling that this state won't last long.

The Prophet said: "Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures: death; none would remember it availing a tightness of living but it would expand it for him; and none would remember it while in an ease of living but it would tighten it for him" (Ibn Hibban, al Bayhaqi).

Remembering death helps a person not to despair when afflicted with hardships nor become arrogant when favored by an easy life.

### Weep over your sins, not over your destiny

Whatever happened was never going to miss you. Whatever missed you was never going to come to you. That's destiny. So there is no point lamenting over things that have passed. Yes, if we have made mistakes in the past, we must correct them and learn from them. But by thinking in terms of "*If I had done this, this would not have happened...*" does not change anything because that was meant to happen, and it would happen anyway, whether you did *this* or did *that*.

Whatever happens is by Allah's will, as He says in the Qur'an:

"No calamity befalls, but by the Leave [i.e. Decision and Qadar (Divine Preordainments)] of Allaah, and whosoever believes in Allaah, He guides his heart" (Qur'an, 64:11)

"The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, though there is good in both. Be avid for what benefits you. Rely upon Allah, and do not be weak. If anything befalls you, do not say, "If only I had done such and such," rather say, "Allah decreed, and what He willed happened, for 'if' only opens the door for Satan" (Sahih Muslim)

Regretting, by using "ifs" only makes us vulnerable to grief and fear, which is of no benefit whatsoever.

Don't underestimate the power of Allah

Shed that inferiority complex. Do away with negative self talk: "I'm not capable enough" "I'm too weak to handle this" "I'll break down with all this tension..." If you are a Muslim, it's because of Allah's Grace. And why won't Allah help you once you've chosen His great religion? Why should He take away His grace from you?

"Allah will never change a grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own selves" (Qur'an, 8:53)

Allah is able to do all things. If you obey Him and rely on him, there is no reason why He won't be on your side. Here's a short poem to stir up the confidence in you to believe in the power of Allah!

### **You are strong**

By Umm 'Isa

Adversity and hardships in life  
Seem to slice you like a butcher's knife  
Happiness and joy of times foregone  
It feels like you can't carry on.

You look up at the dark skies  
No, they don't hear your cries

You feel lonely, all alone  
Is there anyone to hear you moan?

You feel choked  
In tears you're soaked  
With never ending grief,  
No sign of relief.

And just as sadness encompasses you  
Your mind drifts and starts to brew  
Recollecting what was shoved right back  
Before this gloom started its attack.

Why is this happening to me?  
A trial of the highest degree!  
Well, it is because you are strong  
Of course, the Prophet's saying can't be wrong!

Did he not say that those blessed  
With strong faith will have a harder test?  
And when Allah loves someone, He tests him  
Till he walks on earth free of sin.

What more, Allah loves the patient  
For if not, then why didn't  
He destine your life to be easy wherein  
His remembrance would be long forgotten?

Allah is with you, O forbearing one,  
You will see the fruits in the long run  
With every difficulty comes ease-  
It's an opportunity every Muslim should seize.

Allah says He has prepared for the pious  
Eternal pleasure, unimaginable bliss  
Things we've never heard of or seen  
Incomparable to places we've ever been.

Paradise is attained by striving hard  
From it, the common man may be barred  
And the abode of Hell, the Prophet said  
Is hidden behind evil desires instead.

This world is only a temporary phase,  
With a few years and numbered days  
So give it all you can for Paradise  
Obeying Allah is what we're advised

Remember Allah is always near,  
The du'a of the supplicant He does hear  
Closer He is than your jugular vein  
He will alleviate your suffering and pain.

Patience is a great blessing,  
An immense reward it does bring  
Things will change, this stage will pass  
By the will of Allah, you'll be victorious at last!

So just hold on, it's not very long,  
You can overcome this (Insha Allah), for you are strong.

#### Examine the options available

Even in the deepest and darkest of troubles, don't lose hope. Don't feel defeated. Give yourself some time to let out your emotions. Relax for a while. You may want to cry it out, but don't brood over your worries. After all the buckets have been emptied out, get up and get going. There is so much more to be done. Yes, you might be in a somewhat difficult situation. Accept that. Yes, things will be tough. This is life. Now what? Take a paper and pen and jot down how you can proceed from here. What are the options available to you? What are the various courses you can take? After you have made your list, rate each option on a scale of 1 to 10. The rating can go from -10 to -1 as well, depending on how negative an option may be. Next, analyze the pros and cons of each, and the probable consequences of each option.

Whichever alternative you choose, always keep in mind the akhera. Your chosen option should comply with the principles laid down in the Sharia. Ask yourself this question: "Which one is halal, and the dearest to Allah?"

Part of decision making requires two things, as per Islamic guidelines: one, praying Istikhara, and two, consulting people of knowledge regarding your choices.

He said, "When any one of you has an important matter to decide, let him pray two rak'ahs other than the obligatory prayer and then say... (du'a to be said after the prayer)

... "One who seeks guidance from his Creator and consults his fellow believers and then remains firm in his resolve does not regret for Allah has said:

'...and consult them in the affair. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah...' (Qur'an, 3:159)

### A dose of Patience

We always need something to get us moving and keep us in that state. Motivation, in short. A tangible reward like a pizza or an ice cream can do wonders for kids, but they are ineffective in the long run. Allah has prepared for the believers an intangible, everlasting recompense that can be better than anything in this material world. While we are striving for Allah's sake, we may fall down and injure ourselves. Sometimes, it's the fear of injury that keeps us back. Our Lord makes our task easier by consoling and encouraging us through His words. These precious words act as a propeller which prompts us to carry on in the contest of life.

Allah consoles us that hardship is accompanied with times of ease: "With every difficulty comes ease" (Qur'an, 94:5-6)  
No matter how tough things are, Allah assures us that there *will* be ease after that.

Allah will reward those who are patient in the face of trials and calamities:

"And be patient, verily, Allah wastes not the reward of the good-doers." (Qur'an, 11:115)

"Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full, without reckoning." (Qur'an, 39:10)

What greater comfort, Allah is *with* those who are patient and He loves them!

"Truly, Allah is with the patient." (Qur'an, 2:153)

"And Allah loves the patient" (Qur'an, 3:146)

"So do not become weak, nor be sad, and you will be superior if you are indeed believers." (Qur'an, 3:139)

At times, we feel we are in an unbearable situation. That we can't take it anymore. That, enough is enough. However, that is not true because we can handle whatever we are going through. It's possible.

"Allah does not burden a person beyond his scope" (Qur'an, 2:286)

If you are being tested with something, you *are* in a position to handle it, with Allah's help.

You will be glad for your hardship:

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "On the Day of Resurrection, when people who had suffered affliction are given their reward, those who were healthy will wish their skins had been cut to pieces with scissors when they were in the world." (Tirmidhi)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The greatest reward goes together with the greatest affliction. When Allah Almighty loves people, He tests them. All those who are content receive His good pleasure. Those who are angry incur His anger." (Tirmidhi)

Did you know that the stronger your faith, the more difficult your test?

The Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked "Who among the people are most severely tried?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The Prophets, then the right acting people, and so on down through various categories of people. Man will be tested according to the strength of his faith. The stronger his faith, the more severe his trial, and the weaker his faith, the lighter his trial. The believer will be continually tested until he walks on earth with all his wrong actions forgiven." (Sahih Bukhari)

"And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient Who, when afflicted with a calamity say: 'Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.'

They are those who are the blessed and will be forgiven from their Lord and receive His mercy, and it is they who are the guided ones." (Qur'an, 2:155-157)

"Or think you that you will enter Paradise without such (trials) as came to those who passed away before you? They were afflicted with severe poverty and ailments and were so shaken that even the Messenger and those who believed along with him said, "When (will come) the Help of Allah?" Yes! Certainly, the Help of Allah is near!" (Qur'an, 2:214)



The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When Allah wills good for His slave, He hastens the punishment for him in this world, and when Allah wills ill for His slave, he withholds the punishment for his sins from him until he comes with all his sins on the Day of Resurrection. (Tirmidhi)

Al-Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Do not resent the calamities that come and the disasters that occur, for perhaps in something that you dislike will be your salvation, and perhaps in something that you prefer will be your doom.

Al-Fadl ibn Sahl said: There is a blessing in calamity that the wise man should not ignore, for it erases sins, gives one the opportunity to attain the reward for patience, dispels negligence, reminds one of blessings at the time of health, calls one to repent and encourages one to give charity.

Through calamity the believer seeks reward, and there is no way to attain it but patience, and there is no way to be patient except with resolute faith and strong will.

Remember the words of the Messenger (peace be upon him): How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affairs are all good, and this applies to no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is thankful for it and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience and that is good for him. (Sahih Muslim)

Muslim (918) narrated that Umm Salamah said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) say: There is no Muslim who is stricken with a calamity and says what Allah has enjoined: "Verily to Allah we belong and unto Him is our return. O Allah, reward me for my affliction and compensate me with something better", but Allah will compensate him with something better.

She said: When Abu Salamah died, I said: Who among the Muslims is better than Abu Salamah, the first household to migrate to join the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)? Then I said it, and Allah compensated me with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him).

"And seek help in patience and prayer and truly, it is extremely heavy and hard except for Al-Khaashioon [i.e. the true believers in Allah] (Qur'an, 2:54)

"And verily, whosoever shows patience and forgives, that would truly be from the things recommended by Allah"  
(Qur'an, 42:34)

Patience is a great virtue:

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever is patient Allah will bestow patience upon him, and no one is ever given anything better and more generous than patience".

Now that we are Muslims, we know that this life is not the end. What more, we know the importance of the Hereafter, that it is the *real* life, the eternal and lasting one, while this life is only a temporary abode. The Prophet (peace be upon him) rightly said: The wise man is one who prepares for his death.

So, if we go through hardship, it's an opportunity to earn reward for our Afterlife. If we despair, get frustrated, and keep thinking "O Allah, why me?" then how will we be able to get that huge reward? Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an that He will never let the efforts of the believers go in vain. What assurance!

At times, you may feel "Oh I wish I was someone else, maybe this sister or brother of mine, look she/he is so happy, and look at my poor state". But, that's the very point: The test is harder for those who are stronger in faith. We may also face hardships because of mistakes we ourselves have committed.

If you truly believe in the Almighty Creator, then what would ever make you feel that this life is not worth striving for? Do you know that in the sight of Allah, this world is even lesser in importance than the wing of a mosquito?

There are grades even in Paradise, and for something so beautiful, one has to make a sacrifice. Now I leave it upto you to decide, my brothers and sisters, will you choose this life over the eternal, beautiful and unimaginable abode of Paradise?

### Raise your hands up to Him

Du'a itself is a form of worship:

"Du'a is Ibadah" (Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Abu Dawud).

Du'a is one of the most effective ways of alleviating grief. Allah reminds us:

"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." (Qur'an, 13:28)

We do feel better when we talk to someone about our problems, but the best relief we can get is by talking to Allah about our worries. No matter how much you talk to a friend, what can he/she do for you? It is only Allah who can remove your grief.

Whenever some matter troubled the Prophet, he would pray (Ahmad). Just standing up and offering a two rak'ah prayer can have an amazing effect.

Whenever the Prophet was worried or grieved over something, he would supplicate: "O Ever Living, O Self Sustaining, by Your mercy, I seek help" (Hakim)

Allah listens to the call of the weak and distressed. He answers the one who supplicates to Him for something good. He is not unaware of your calling upon Him.

"Verily your Lord is Generous and Shy. If His servant raises his hands to Him (in supplication) He becomes shy to return them empty." (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi)

"Whoever does du'a to Allah, Allah fulfills his seeking or in exchange averts misfortune until the du'a is not related to sin or breaking some relation." (Tirmidhi)

### The Unbreakable Handhold

"Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)" (Qur'an, 3:159). If we leave the future up to Allah without worrying and fretting, it is a meritorious act which is a part of true faith. But, does trusting Allah mean that we stop planning and we give up even trying? The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) clarified this:

One day the Prophet noticed a Bedouin leaving his camel without tying it and he asked the Bedouin, "Why don't you tie down your camel?" The Bedouin answered, "I put my trust in Allah." The Prophet then said, "Tie your camel and put your trust in Allah" (Tirmidhi).

We must try to do whatever is in our capacity and then leave the rest to Allah. Preventative and preparative actions are necessary and they

do not display a lack of trust in Allah for our sustenance, safety, or future plans.

However, if our camel is meant to wander, no amount of tying him will keep him from getting free, as this verse of the Qur'an tells us:

"And you will not will except as Allah Wills, the Lord of the worlds."  
(Qur'an, 81:29)

While we need to carry out our duty to the best of our abilities, we must remember that in no way can we control the outcome of events. Even the Prophets did not control the outcome of their efforts. Some were successful, others were not. Once we have done our duty, we should leave the results to Allah. Regardless of the results of our efforts, we will be rewarded for the part we have played. Allah does not demand results. He is happy if He finds us making our best sincere effort; and He will help us if we are indeed working hard. All we have to do is obey Allah and follow the Sharia, and He will be with us, He will help us and provide for us from places we cannot even perceive!

"And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And He will provide him from (sources) he could never imagine. And whosoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him..." (Qur'an, 65:2-3)

The Prophet said: "If you put your faith completely in Allah, He will arrange for your sustenance in the same way as He provides for the birds. They go out in the morning with their stomachs empty and return filled in the evening." (Tirmidhi).

Once we give up false beliefs and we believe in Allah, we have got hold of the unbreakable handhold:

"Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah, has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break." (Qur'an, 2:256)

## *11. In the Prophet's time...*

Hardships are challenges in our daily life. They make us strong and give us ways to find solutions, as well as build confidence and endurance in us. Remember "Tough times never last but tough people do."

Allah tests a believer and it is He who gives him strength. Notice a few examples of how the Muslims in the early generations went through storms and came out as smoothly as a knife comes out through butter!

Never panic even if you think the problem is irresolvable. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Patience is at the first stroke of a calamity". We must try to exercise patience the minute we are faced with a difficult situation. It's like a fast ball thrown at you- but by the time it reaches you, it will lose its velocity and speed.

Once when the Prophet (peace be upon him) was prostrating while praying in the Ka'bah, Abu Jahl asked his companions to bring the dirty foetus of a she-camel and place it on his back. 'Uqbah bin Abi Mu'ait was the unfortunate man who hastened to do this horrible act. A peal of laughter rose amongst the disbelievers. Meanwhile, Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet (peace be upon him) happened to pass that way. She removed the filth from her father's back. (Sahih Bukhari)

The uncle of 'Uthman bin 'Affan used to wrap 'Uthman (who was a believer) in a mat of palm leaves, and set fire under him. When Umm Mus'ab bin 'Umair heard of her son's conversion, she put him to starvation and then expelled him from her house. He used to enjoy a full luxurious, easy life, but in the aftermath of the tortures he sustained, his skin got wizened, and he assumed a horrible physical appearance.

Bilal, the slave of Omayyah bin Khalaf, was severely beaten by his master when the latter came to know of his conversion to Islam. Sometimes a rope was put around his neck and street boys were made to drag him through the streets and even across the hillocks of Makkah. At times he was subjected to prolonged deprivation of food and drink; at other times he was bound up and made to lie down on the burning sand under the crushing burden of heavy stones. Similar other measures were resorted to in order to force him to recant. All this proved in vain. He persisted in his belief in the Oneness of Allah.

On one such occasion, Abu Bakr was passing by; and moved by pity, he purchased and emancipated him from slavery.

Another victim of the highhandedness of Quraish was 'Ammar bin Yasir, a freed slave of Bani Makhzoum. He, along with his mother and father, embraced Islam in its early phase. They were repeatedly made to lie on the burning sand and were beaten severely. 'Ammar was at times tossed up on embers. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was greatly moved by the atrocities which were being perpetrated upon 'Ammar and his family. He always comforted them and raised his hand in prayer and said: "Be patient, you will verily find your abode in Paradise ." Yasir, the father, died because of repeated tortures. Sumaiyah, 'Ammar's mother was bayoneted to death by Abu Jahl himself, and thus merited the title of the first woman martyr in Islam. 'Ammar himself was subjected to various modes of torture and was always threatened to sustain severe suffering unless he abused Muhammad (peace be upon him) and recanted to Al-Lat and 'Uzza (idols of the pagan Arabs). In a weak moment, he uttered a word construed as recantation though his heart never wavered and he came back once to the Prophet (peace be upon him), who consoled him for his pain and confirmed his faith.

Khabbab bin Al-Aratt was also an easy victim to similar outrages on every possible occasion. He experienced exemplary torture and maltreatment. The Makkan polytheists used to pull his hair and twist his neck, and made him lie on burning coal with a big rock on his chest to prevent him from escaping. Some Muslims of rank and position were wrapped in the raw skins of camels and thrown away, and others were put in armours and cast on burning sand in the scorching sun of Arabia.

Even the women converts were not spared, and the list is too long to include all of them. Zanirah, An-Nahdiyah and her daughter, Umm 'Ubais and many others had their full share of persecution at the hand of the oppressors — 'Umar bin Al-Khattab included — of course before his conversion to Islam.

With all the various examples, I am definitely not indicating that every revert must be prepared to go through these situations. However, I only want to present to you the state and condition of the early Muslims, and the tough life they led.

Just imagine what pain and anguish these true believers went through!  
And we, lying here in comfort, complain when a small adversity befalls us or we complain that following Islam in totality is too hard upon us!  
When will our eyes ever open? When will we arise from this deep, ignorant sleep of ours? We complain about the few sorrows we have, the "difficult" situations we face and how we are overburdened by problems! If we compare what we go through and what these strong Muslims went through, we would call ourselves spoilt brats!  
Alhamdulillah, our "problems" might be periods of ease for that generation!

## *12. Important guidelines*

### Fear none but Allah

Some individuals have a deep sense of love for Islam, and they realize that it is the Truth; however, they may feel hesitant to embrace Islam because of fear of society or fear of hurting their seniors. Allah says in Surah Baqarah:

"Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy Hand-hold that never breaks" (Qur'an, 2:256).

Allah assures in Surah Talaq, chapter 65, verses 2-3:

"And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty).

And He will provide him from (sources) he could ever imagine. And whoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him."

Allah assures us that if we have chosen His religion, and we follow His path, fearing Him and obeying Him, He will pave a way for us out of difficult situations. The next verse says "And He will provide him from (sources) he could ever imagine. And whoever puts his trust in Allah, then He will suffice him."

Today, we may think "how can things ever work out? My family will never accept my new faith, people in society will shun me, I will be deserted and stranded with no place to go to, how will I find a suitable spouse?" and many such statements.

The point to be noted is that, once you choose Allah's way, Allah says He will provide for you from sources you could not even imagine! Our perception and imagination are limited. Think: At some point in your life, has there been some event that you never expected would take place, and after it actually took place, you thought "Wow! I never thought things would turn out this way!" Put your trust in Allah, for none but Allah knows what will happen tomorrow. When we have chosen Allah as our Lord, why would He not help us?

It is Allah who changes the hearts of people. Were you not once unaware of Islam till Allah guided you? Some of us have verbally abused Islam and were very hostile towards Islam and Muslims, before we embraced the faith. But what happened suddenly that changed our entire thinking? What was it that transformed us completely?



Umar bin Khattaab was one of the strongest, sternest and rigid men before Islam entered his heart. He was a man of dauntless courage and resolution, feared and respected in Makkah, and hitherto a bitter opponent of Islam. Who knew that this man who used to hate Islam so bitterly would be guided one day, and what more, he would become one of the companions of the beloved Prophet, be given the glad tidings of Paradise in this world itself and become one of the khalifs of the Muslims?.

Possibly, your close friend or relative who hates Islam from the depth of his heart may embrace the faith one day!

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that the hearts of people are between Allah's fingers. He can change them as and when He wants. It's so easy for Him, the Most Powerful. When Allah decrees a matter, all He says is ""Be!" and it takes place. It's that easy. So, Allah can change the heart of a person at anytime. You and I won't know when.

What will happen tomorrow has already been decreed and is written in the Book of Decrees. Just think, if you turn away from the religion after knowing the truth, or even after you enter it, you are scared and afraid of society, who would actually benefit by you living in fear, and thus not implementing Islam as you should? Who would be really pleased if you sinned, if you stopped yourself from doing some obligatory acts in Islam because you fear people around you? Would you be that happy one? Your friends, parents, or relatives? No! Who else but Shaytan, the accursed devil! It's his aim and goal to deviate us from the right path, whether we are considering taking up Islam, or have already taken it up. Shaytan promised Allah that he would lead most men astray except Allah's chosen slaves.

(Satan)said: "By Your Might, then I will surely mislead them all, Except Your chosen slaves amongst them (faithful, obedient, true believers of Islamic Monotheism)" (38: 82-83)

So, what prevents us from being one of those chosen slaves of Allah? If you knew the way to reach your destination, would you take another route, knowing it would lead you to Hell?

My brothers and sisters, always remember that when we feel like committing a sin, when we fear people and we have doubts in our minds about Allah, it is none other than the devil who inspires these thoughts. Allah states:

It is only Shaytan that suggests to you the fear of his awliya (supporters and friends, disbelievers), so fear them not, but fear Me (Allah), if you are true believers" (Qur'an 3:175)

Leave aside the future, because none but Allah knows it. Do what you can in the present and obey Allah and fear Him. Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday. So, was today all that bad? So many times, we think about the worst that can happen, but how many times has that actually happened? Maybe never, or one in a hundred times. As humans, we tend to fear situations and people. Shaytan is the cleverest in instilling these thoughts.

There is a theory in Psychology called Rational Emotive Therapy. It says that an action does not give rise to a consequence directly. It is the belief about the event that gives rise to the consequence. You can apply this in any aspect of a worldly matter. If you think people will ridicule you, they will harm you, you will keep living in fear. But, another person in your place may put his trust in Allah and not think about things which he has no control over. In this case, the latter will live happily, and his confidence might actually make people feel he is a strong man who has taken a good decision for himself. It's possible that what you fear will not take place, and in fact, things would turn out very different. If you think in these terms, InshaAllah, you will see things in a different perspective and you will be able to live life in a more fulfilling way.

#### Fear of hurting family members

Some reverts worry about their parents' reaction; not in the form of fear, but in the form of grief and sorrow. One revert made a statement "My parents are old and weak, before I tell them about my faith, we might just have to get an ambulance ready because of the shock they will get". Another said "My mother has done so much for me. My parents were separated when I was young, and it was my mother who bore hardship and brought me up with love and care".

Concerns about our family are very natural. All of us worry about our close ones whom we love very much. These are all emotions which we experience as human beings. The attachment and bond that we share with our dear ones is unexplainable. If we hear of an acquaintance being seriously sick, we may visit him and wish him well. But, if our own mother has a slight fever, how careful we are to see that it does not get worse, to the point that we tend to think the fever is

something very serious! We resort to exaggerating the illnesses of our family members. That's because we want to take complete care of them, and we know that if something happens to them, we will be greatly affected.

Islam encourages us to be good to our parents and relatives, even if they be non Muslims. The one who severs the ties of kinship will not enter Paradise. Serving parents is so important that we are commanded to even refrain from saying a word of contempt to them; rather we should address them in terms of honour and respect. In today's world, which way of life advocates such kindness? This is the age of throwing parents in old age homes, just because the children take them as a burden! How distant are Islamic teachings from such cruelty!

Obedience to the Creator comes before obedience to humans.

The Prophet said: "There is no obedience to the created if it means disobedience to the Creator." (Ahmad)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said "Obedience is in what is good and right." (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Humans are capable of making mistakes and fallacies. Does everything that you thought as "right" 10 years ago, still hold true for you now? Even your parents will make the same statement, if not 10, atleast 20 years ago. Allah enjoins kindness and forgiveness, but He does not enjoin evil and falsehood. We cannot expect our non Muslim family to speak in lines with the Islamic teachings, simply because they are ignorant. Did we not speak just like them in our days of ignorance? Once we realize the importance of choosing the religion of Truth, we must adhere to it and not imbibe the ways of living of those who are ignorant.

It is very important to be concerned about our family members. As mentioned earlier, Islam greatly encourages this. However, if we are so concerned about their material well being in this life, what about the Hereafter which is eternal and lasting? By fearing their reactions to your faith, imagine the loss caused to them by not telling them about Islam! How do you know, perchance one of them will accept Islam! You can do as much good to them as you want in this life, but would that avert their punishment in the Hereafter? Would not a true son/ daughter want to guide his/her family to eternal Paradise?

What is the point of striving to win one game in a tournament when you will lose the entire tournament itself?

We will all die one day. When we will die is written in our destiny. By hiding the Truth, can one avert death? I think it's almost a hypocritical attitude when people say they want to hide their faith because they want to keep their parents happy, knowing at the same time, that if the parents die as disbelievers, they will enter Hell. As good Muslims, good human beings, and good children, our foremost duty must be to convey the message of Islam to them so they might ponder over it and be saved from the everlasting Torment.

Reflect on how excited we all are to share good news with our family. How eager we are to tell our close ones about something that may benefit them in this world, and how cautious we are to warn them of an impending danger! Now if you knew the way to a life which has eternal happiness, no sorrow, no pain, no injury, no misery, should you not be all the more eager to share it with others?? Why not? What stops you from showing a way that solves all problems not only in life, but also after death?

If the answer is still no, we have to admit we are selfish. In fact, just evaluate: why do we care so much about certain people? Is it because we really care for *them*, or because it gives *us* a sense of satisfaction by seeing them ok? Do we really weep for *someone* or due to the pain it causes *us*?

Suppose you know your young sibling might suffer if something happens to your mother, is it really concern for the young one, or your internal guilt that you want to avoid if something takes place?

We have embraced Islam for no one but ourselves. It will not profit anyone but us to take up this religion. We are doing no one a favour by following it.

On the Day of Judgement, when Allah, your Lord and Creator questions you about why you did not convey the message of Islam to at least your closest ones, what answer will you give Him? That you were scared something might happen to them? That they might drop dead?

Dear brothers and sisters, always remember that life and death are in Allah's Hands. We cannot avert death in any way or change destiny. What ever is written in our destiny will certainly take place. We cannot therefore say that we will be avoiding a calamity by neglecting an Islamic principle.

This life is a test. Why not take your loved ones along with you to the beautiful abode of Paradise? Would you not want them there with you?

So don't hesitate: just be gentle in your approach even when you are about to declare your faith. Don't give up after a few objections. Keep going.

### Is society always right?

Have you ever contemplated the way in which we are brought up? Our upbringing and societal influences determine the way we think and perceive situations to a large extent. Let us see some simple examples of differences in culture. In USA , it is normal for people to shake hands when they meet but it is unusual for men to kiss when they greet each other. The British often do no more than say "hello" when they see friends. Even adults usually shake hands only when they meet for the first time. French people, including school-children, shake hands with their friends, or kiss them on both cheeks, each time they meet and they leave. That's why French people think the British are unfriendly and impolite. In Japan it is polite and normal for men and women to bow when they greet someone. In Polynesia you take your friend's hands and use them to stroke your face. The Inuit, who live in Canada , rub noses as a way of greeting. Now if you are an American, you might find the way of greeting of the Inuit "strange" when you saw it for the first time. However, if you were an Inuit, you might find other ways of greeting very weird.

Since the time we are born, we are conditioned and programmed in certain ways which are either at a conscious or subconscious level. So, a person living in say India may find the concept of polygyny (a man marrying more than one wife) to be absurd. Even some Indian Muslims may think this way due to the influence of Hindu culture. The Jains (who are strict vegetarians) will find eating non vegetarian food as "barbaric". People of the "modern" age (whichever religion they belong to) may find it hard to accept the veil as a symbol of modesty.

We as Muslims, don't follow the Arab culture. When Islam came, many of the pre existing cultural norms in Arabia were wiped out. Women were honoured and it was prohibited to bury female infants alive.

Allah is not only the God of the Muslims. He is the God of the Hindus, the Christians, the Jews, Sikhs, and the God of every living thing.

Islam is a religion directly from the Creator. Thus, what the Creator ordains is for the good of humanity.

Before embracing Islam, we might have found a particular aspect of Islam difficult for us to digest. Why? Because we were not used to it, because people in our society did not favour it. If our society does not believe in a practice, does that practice have to be necessarily wrong? Why, our societal practices may be wrong, for all you know!

Many a time, our faith becomes weak when we notice the difference. But, why do we agree with these man made principles and not consider Islam, the religion of the Creator, to be right? When there is a contradiction in the two ways of living, why should we agree with what people say instead of what God Himself says? Whenever there is a contradiction, we think Islam is wrong. Why don't we think people are wrong?

Allah, in His infinite Wisdom has commanded certain things and prohibited others. Many of the reasons are apparent in today's evil and corrupted society. We may not, however, know the reason for all those laws. But, once we accept Allah as our Lord, the Qur'an as the Book of Allah and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the Messenger of Allah, why should one harbor doubts about the minute details about the religion?

We definitely do not consider ourselves superior than our Creator in devising laws for humanity, do we?

You can conceal your faith if you face hostility from your parents and relatives.

Shaikh Saleh al Munajjid, a noted scholar of contemporary times, says regarding this: "it is possible for a person, if he becomes Muslim and fears unbearable persecution or hardship, to conceal his Islam and keep it a secret, hiding his acts of worship from the people around him although it is difficult to do so."

### Dialogue with Non Muslims

You might tell some of your friends about your faith, and one day even announce it publicly. At these times, these non Muslims may strongly disagree with your decision, and try to brainwash you by telling you what you have done is wrong. These are testing times. You can counter these questions with some points given below.

Islam is a logical religion, based on reason and science. No one accepts it blindly. There are numerous scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an (refer to "Qur'an and modern science- compatible or incompatible?" by Dr. Zakir Naik). There is not a single contradiction in the Qur'an, infact, all the laws in the Sharia actually serve for the good of humanity. Most beautiful of all is the concept of God in Islam. When anyone tries to attack your faith, always stick to the concept of God.

Learn these simple but strong arguments that you will require while defending your faith:

Ask the non Muslim: "How can God be a human being?"

"Do you mean that God needs to eat, sleep, urinate, defecate, and reproduce children?" Of course not! God is above all these humanly attributes.

Some non Muslims say that God comes to earth in human form. So, then you answer "Then, he ceases to be God. He becomes a human. When you look closely, you notice that all those (Ram, Krishna, Jesus, Hanuman, Sai Baba, etc) whom you try to fit in the category lived like mere human beings. They might have performed miracles (so did Prophet Muhammad), but that was by God's permission." These non Muslims may say that some humans have divine powers, but at the same time, they will agree that God is above the sky. So, God can't be at two places at the same time, can He?

As for worshipping idols, people say they do so to bring them closer to God because we cannot see God. So, you can counter question: "If we cannot see God, then how can we make an image of Him? It means we are creating something other than God, so we end up worshipping a creation again" Secondly, if you make an idol of God, who is greater- the idol or its creator? So, you are then greater than what you have created! In Islam, there is a direct connection between the worshipper and the Creator. You do not require an intermediary or a saint to intercede on your behalf. There are several verses which prove this, some of which are:

"And your Lord said: ' Invoke Me. I will respond to your (invocation)". (Qur'an, 40:60)

Allah addresses us: "And when My slaves ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then (tell them), I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright" (Qur'an 2:186)

Allah also says "Is not He Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors

of the earth, generations after generations? Is there any God with Allah? Little is that you remember!" (Qur'an, 27:62)

Few individuals deny that God exists; they say there is no Creator. If you look around you, you will notice that everything in this world has been created- furniture, houses, books, electronic gadgets, every single thing. When such inanimate things require a creator, then how can a complex organism like a human being have no Creator? There are so many processes taking place inside a human's body which are organized and perfect. Plants also have a perfect system inside them. Even the universe has been created such that every year on the same day, the sun rises and sets at exactly the same time. Who manages this punctuality? If there was even a slight delay in the revolution or rotation of planets, there would be a collision and the earth would have been destroyed. Who manages all this? When a machine like a computer requires a genius' brain to develop it, how can humans beings, animals, plants and the entire universe could have just come about, by chance?

Some people say God is in everything. And everything means every single thing. So, is He in the garbage bin, in the toilets, in excreta, and so on? Is that really our God?

God's qualities are unique to Him only. He has created humans, plants, animals and the entire universe. He has knowledge of everything, including the number of strands of hair on your head and the number of grains of sand on the beach. Would any of the idols, or humans, or anything else qualify for these attributes?

Then, why don't we worship the One who has created us all, the Most powerful, and Unique? Why not surrender to Him alone?

Think of an example: Your parents have given birth to you. They bring you up to the best of their ability, they give you food, clothing, shelter, affection, education, and so much more. Then, one day when you are all grown up, you decide that you will call someone else your mother and father, probably a stranger on the road. Can you imagine how hurt your parents would be? Can you even think about the emotions they would go through? Now, what about when we call others as god besides the true God? Is that not a serious mistake on our part?

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that every child is born as a Muslim, and his parents bring him up as a follower of another faith, like a Hindu, Christian, Jew, etc. So, we were Muslims by birth and our parents brought us up as followers of another religion. Imagine, after



this, when we reach the age of puberty and we can decide on our own, we reject our Creator, the One who fashioned us, and we ascribe this power to many who don't even know that they are being called upon!

Imagine Allah's mercy and tolerance: despite people calling others as their Lord, He still gives them sustenance, and what more, some of the wealthiest men in the world are non Muslims! They live in palaces, wear fancy clothes and eat rich food. Alhamdulillah! What a high level of tolerance!

Finally, remember that we are accountable to Allah Alone. Who should we fear when we know that He is our Lord, who deserves our worship? Those who blame us for our religion are ignorant people. Will we go back to where we were after Allah guided us? Some of us were alcoholics, chain smokers, drug addicts and deceivers before embracing Islam. Some reverts had a bad past and Allah the Almighty removed them from the filth. Why should we then take this blessing for granted? What if Allah had not guided you? Think about where you would be then.

### Whom should you learn your religion from?

The first thing that the seeker of knowledge must do is to choose trustworthy scholars, people who are religiously-committed, trustworthy and pious. He should only acquire knowledge from those who are qualified, and those who are truly qualified are those who have the knowledge and act upon it, by obeying Allah and adhering to His laws and commands. The teacher has the greatest effect on the student, so he should have the quality of fear of Allah (taqwa).

It was narrated that Ibraaheem al-Nakhai, a trustworthy scholar of the past, said:

When they came to a man to acquire knowledge from him, they would look at his character, his prayer and his situation, then they would take knowledge from him. Al-Jaami' al-Akhlaaq al-Raawi (1/127).

The scholars stated that this is especially important with regard to learning the Qur'an.

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in al-Tibyaan fi Adaab Hamalat al-Qur'an (p. 13):

It should not be learned except from one who is fully qualified and whose religious commitment is apparent, whose knowledge is proven to be sound and whose piety is well known.

Muhammad ibn Sireen, Maalik ibn Anas and others among the early generation of Muslims said: This knowledge has to do with religion, so look to whom you take your religion from.

The seeker of knowledge should pray asking Allaah for guidance concerning the one from whom he will take knowledge and learn good attitude and manners; and is proven to be kind, compassionate and chivalrous, and who is well known for his chastity and piety, and who is well versed and has deep understanding.

### What should you do in these situations?

At times you may feel the heat of being a Muslim and at times you may be accepted by your family. It could also be that they argue with you and smartly pose you questions which make you feel uncomfortable. The Qur'an gives us guidance about how to deal with such situations.

- If you are in a group where your family members or others are verbally hostile and fall into disputes, and when you have tried reasoning out, but it seems that they just don't want to listen to you, then:

"And the slaves of the Most Merciful are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness and when the ignorant address them, they reply back with mild words of gentleness" (Qur'an 25:63)

- If your parents are Jews or Christians:  
"And argue not with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) unless it be in (a way) that is better" (Qur'an 29:46)
- If your family or friends mock at Allah, His messenger or the Qur'an, then:  
"And when you see those who engage in a false conversation about Our Verses, by mocking at them, stay away from them till they return to another topic" (Qur'an 6:68)
- If you try hard to tell them about the Truth of Islam, and yet they keep bothering you, then:  
"Say! For us are our deeds and for you are your deeds" (Qur'an 2:139)
- At times you may hear things that grieve you, but be patient :

"You shall certainly be tried and tested in your wealth and properties and in your personal selves, and you shall certainly hear much that will grieve you from those who received the Scripture before you and from those who ascribe partners to Allah, but if you persevere patiently, and become pious, then verily, that will be a determining factor in all affairs, and that is from the great matters" (Qur'an 3:186)

- When you are in a position in which you can retaliate or take revenge, then remember:  
"The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (evil) with one which is better and verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend" (Qur'an 41:34)
- Keep away from friends who mock at your religion:  
"O you who believe! Take not as friends and helpers those who take your religion as mockery and fun..." (5:57)

Did you notice that in all these cases, the Qur'an doesn't advocate hostility in the least bit? That is why Islam is a religion of peace!

#### How to build strong relationships with the Muslim community:

a) Get in touch with a local Islamic center. These days there are many Da'wah centers in various cities across the globe. If there are no such centers in your city or town then approach a local Mosque and meet the Imam as well as the trustees/seniors of the Mosque.

b) Introduce yourself to senior Muslims of the community who are socially strong. (In case you are a female, be in touch with females. It is always essential to maintain hijab during these meetings). Keep the contact numbers of important people from the community. Choose advocates, doctors, professors and social workers from your local community. If you are a female, it is better to approach a senior female Muslim. InshaAllah, this will help you in maintaining hijab and also get good female friends in the circle of Muslims.

c) Attend Islamic classes if there are any in your locality or city. You can ask your Muslim friends to guide you to an alim to teach you Arabic and Islam.

d) Be in regular touch with fellow Muslims who are pious and good in character. You will find good Muslims at Islamic conferences, Da'wah centers etc.

## Miscellaneous

- Start learning du'as and easy Qur'anic verses in order to pray properly. Learn the Prophet's (peace be upon him) way of praying, which can be found in books of hadeeth.
- Learn a few Islamic terms and use them regularly. These terms have been given in the section of "Getting familiar with Islamic terms"
- It is not necessary to change your name and adopt a Muslim name, unless your name implies something leading to shirk or violates the sharia in any way. Some examples of names that require to be changed are Ramdas (a worshipper of Ram), Amar (one who is always alive), Michael, etc. There are many Muslims who have Persian names, for example 'Feroze'. It is not fardh (compulsory) to have an Arabic name only; but the name should have a good meaning.
- Get a conversion certificate and fulfill other legal formalities according to the local law. If you stay in India, make an affidavit through a Muslim advocate and take a conversion certificate. If you have changed your name, add it in the Government Gazette. In the gulf countries, there are special government offices to help you. This is not a requirement for becoming a Muslim, rather it is required legally for Hajj and at other times.
- Declare your Islam when you feel confident. If people show surprise, tell them about the concept of God in Islam and other beautiful concepts that charmed you.
- Do Da'wah (inviting others to Islam) boldly and wisely and without hesitating to take the initiative. Keep aside worries about financial condition and societal reaction.

## Choosing a Spouse

Marriage has its own virtues. It gives you a Muslim family and a spouse who would stand beside you, in addition to social support. It is

compulsory for every Muslim to get married. However, beware of love marriages, as it is forbidden in Islam to fall in love before marriage.

The process of getting into a marital relationship has many aspects. The following would be some good advice:

- Be in touch with the local community by attending their lectures and get-togethers. You may meet people who may suggest a prospective bride/ bridegroom.
- Have your well written biodata and hand it over to a senior member of a Da'wah center. If you are a male, hand over your biodata to a male, and if you are a female, hand it over to a female.
- Choose on the basis of religion and piety. Get married to a virtuous Muslim or Muslimah.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, in the famous hadeeth

“Women may be married for four things: their wealth, their lineage, their beauty and their religious commitment. Choose the one who is religiously-committed, may your hands be rubbed with dust (i.e., may you prosper).” (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“These four qualities are those that are sought when marrying a woman. They are the qualities that men seek in women. So this is speaking of what happens; it is not a command to that effect. The apparent meaning is that it is permissible to seek all of these qualities when marrying, or one of them, but seeking religious commitment is best and most important.”

Character and piety are lasting and are a determining factor. Allah can bless any one with wealth.

- Be flexible in choosing and don't put many unreasonable conditions. Don't focus on small matters and don't reject a proposal based on irrelevant criteria.
- Note down your expectations and requirements and discuss them before marriage. Don't leave anything ambiguous. Ask someone to

discuss this on your behalf; a senior close friend of yours or a guardian in the case of a female.

- See to it that you meet the family members of the would-be spouse if they are Muslims.
- Involve senior people of a Da'wah center in finalizing the marriage. A female must have a male guardian who would help finalize the marriage. She can keep in touch with the guardian's wife/sister so she does not interact with the male guardian directly.

When you interact with the person you see for marriage, it should be amidst family members and other people, and never in seclusion.

Once you have thought about a proposal and want to decide whether you should consider it for marriage, offer salaatul istikhaarah, a 2 unit prayer as per the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), in which a person consults his Lord regarding the decision he has to make. One should also consult Muslim seniors regarding the proposal.

In order to get an in-depth understanding about married life, whom to consider for marriage, etc. there is a series of books called "The Muslim Family" by Muhammad al Jibaly. It is a masterpiece on the topic.

When you are in the process of looking out for a prospective partner, keep in mind that what is good for you will come to you at the right time. Allah knows best who is good for you and what is the best time to get married. Some one whom we feel is the best candidate may not actually be so.

We don't know the future- whether in this life or the Hereafter. We don't know where a religious spouse may lead us to. What we must do is keep praying to Allah for the best in both worlds, and put our trust in Him, for He knows best what is good for us. You can recite this du'a:

"Rabbanaa aateenaa fid dunyaa hasanah wa fil aakhirati hasanah wa qinaa adhaaban naar"

"Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire!" (Qur'an, 2:201)

### *13. Others like us*

... A collection of revert stories

At times, reverts in Islam undergo a great struggle. When they declare their faith, some of their relatives may shun or avoid them. Their old friends may refuse to accept their new lifestyle. Some of them have families which are unable to digest the fact that they have embraced Islam.

During this time it is the duty of other brothers and sisters in Islam to lush new reverts with friendship, brotherhood, love, kindness, affection, etc.

Some Muslims do not accept reverts with their past. Before Islam, a person is ignorant and thus, cannot be blamed for what he/she did. Allah confirms:

"Say to those who have disbelieved, if they cease (from disbelief) their past will be forgiven. But if they return (thereto), then the examples of those (punished) before them have already preceded (as a warning)." (Qur'an, 8:38)

What more, the evil deeds of a new Muslim will be changed into good deeds:

"And those who invoke not any other (god) along with Allah, nor kill such life as Allah has forbidden, except for just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse and whoever does this shall receive the punishment. The torment will be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein in disgrace; Except those who repent and believe (in Islamic Monotheism), and do righteous deeds, for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Qur'an, 25:68-70)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself said that Islam destroys and erases the sins that came before it:

Amr ibn al Aas said: When Allah put Islam in my heart, I came to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: "Give me your right hand so that I may swear allegiance to you." He held out his hand and I withdrew my hand. He said, "What is the matter, O 'Amr?" I said, "I want to stipulate a condition." He said, "What do you want to stipulate?" I said, "That I will be forgiven." He said, "Do you



not know that Islam destroys that which came before it?" (Sahih Muslim)

Even all the companions of the Prophet (who were the best of generations) were reverts!

The following stories are those of reverts from different walks of life, who have come together at the junction of Islam. The stories are specific to their respective situations; however, one can draw lessons from them.

#### 1. Anya

Anya, a 36 year old woman was a happily married woman with 2 children. The Hindu couple had never before studied the religion of Islam. Then one day, Anya's Muslim friend gifted her a copy of the Glorious Qur'an. Anya did not want to read it at first because she had a wrong belief that the Qur'an was meant only for Muslims. However, her friend cleared out that misconception for her, and Anya started reading the Book. What turned out, was that a year later, after much research on the religion, she embraced Islam. Alhamdulillah. She had kept asking her husband to study the religion along with her as well, but her husband always refused, saying he had no time for religion and thought it was a waste of time. However, he never once stopped her from taking up the religion or practicing it. By Allah's Grace, she started offering her prayers, fasted the month of Ramadan, attended Islamic talks, and even took the hijab. Her husband at first was furious that his wife would be covering herself with this "outdated garment". However, with gentle persuasion and explaining the wisdom of the hijab, he agreed. As Anya gained more knowledge, she learnt that it is obligatory to marry a man who is a Muslim only. So, she consulted authentic scholars, who told her to keep talking to her husband about Islam, about the beautiful concept of God, the reasons why certain things are allowed and prohibited, and the nature of this temporary life. She was a very patient woman all throughout. She would keep talking to her husband, reminding him, and inviting him to Islam.

It was now almost 3 years since she had embraced Islam.

Unfortunately, her husband was adamant on sticking to his faith. After Anya's wonderful attitude, patient listening and clarifications about the religion, he still refused to accept Islam. It was now that Anya knew she had to take a call. She had learnt a lot about Islam, and she would either stay in the marriage if her husband became a Muslim or had to walk out. She discussed this with her husband, and he still refused to embrace Islam, even if it resulted in a divorce. So, Anya walked out of

the marriage with her 2 small children. She took up a halal job in an Islamic institution, with the help of some Muslims, and was able to make ends meet. Today, she is a qualified Islamic da'ee, married to an Islamic orator. Alhamdulillah!

## 2.Aisha

Aisha first encountered Islam when she was in a relationship with her Muslim boyfriend, and planned to get married to him soon. Though this boy was not totally Islamic (because an affair is not allowed in the first place), he would keep talking to her about Islam. She knew he was somewhat pious because he prayed and fasted, but did not know much beyond that. In the course of these meetings, it so happened that Aisha became strongly attracted to Islam. She knew that she had to become a Muslim if she wanted to marry this boy, but never forced herself to try and like the religion.

One day, in the midst of a few Muslim sisters, Aisha recited the Shahada. From then on, she was very particular in observing the rules and regulations of Islam, to the point of even restricting herself from meeting her boyfriend because she knew it was haram. As she learnt more, she told her boyfriend that they would have to get married or terminate the relationship. The boy would always give some excuse or the other but would never come down to the point of marriage. So, she cut off all contact with him and continued to learn Islam and practice in secret, without her parents' knowledge. At the same time, she had kept her options open for proposals from Islamic boys. One of the Muslim sisters at an Islamic organization offered her son for marriage. Aisha's guardians (Muslims from the community) met the boy's parents, and found out that he was a pious boy with a good character. Aisha discussed this with her parents. They were verbally hostile in the beginning and did not accept this marriage even after she clarified that it was not a love marriage, but rather, she had chosen the boy because of his religion. Discussions proceeded and the marriage was finalized. Alhamdulillah, she is now married and is the proud mother of three children. Her family accepted her after she gave birth to her first child. They realized that her husband was truly a good man and they admitted that they would never have been able to find a man with such good character from their own community! Aisha is a very happy woman and she practices her religion to the best of her ability.

(Note: In Aisha's case, she declared her faith while talking about her marriage. However, a revert may declare his/her faith much before talking about marriage. It depends on one's confidence, situation,

family background, etc. However, the most important point here is that though her boyfriend introduced her to Islam, she gained more knowledge than him, and left him, but not Islam. Alhamdulillah, Aisha carried on firmly with Islam.)

### 3.Sarah

Common statements made by Sarah were: "I love my parents so much... my family showered me with so much affection until I embraced Islam. My family's attitude towards me is hurting me a lot. Sometimes I even think of leaving Islam, then Allah showers His mercy on me and I remind myself that this life is a test and this world is just a temporary abode... and I would say 'I should not fail this test and Allah, The Most Merciful will shower His mercy and blessing on me and my family...'"

This 22 year old girl lived with her parents. When she declared her faith to her family members, they were angry and kept taunting her because of her decision. Not a day passed when they would tell her something mean either about herself or her religion. Her relatives and friends would hurl accusations at her, telling her she was inconsiderate and selfish because she did not think about the pain caused to her parents, and criticizing her because she chose only Islam, from all the other religions in the world. However, she knew that Allah had guided her and she would strive to invite her family to Islam, leave alone giving it up. How could she throw away Allah's blessing once it was bestowed on her? People around her said nasty things because they were obviously ignorant about the Truth of Islam. Even during the Prophet's times, the disbelievers would call the Prophet (peace be upon him) a sorcerer, a liar, a magician and a madman (we seek refuge in Allah). However, the believers were strong and convinced about their faith.

Allah gave her the strength and she battled it out for 3 years. She engaged in Allah's remembrance, attended Islamic lectures, interacted with sisters, and fulfilled her duties as much as she could. She gained knowledge and strengthened her faith with Allah's Help. Allah was her Guide, Protector and Helper, so she put her trust in Him and left everything up to Him. In due course, she left her house and is now settled elsewhere. Sarah's firm faith and steadfastness had helped her go miles in her life.

### 4.Yusuf

Peter was a middle aged man with a booming career and a highly paid post in a multinational bank.

He could buy all the material benefits he ever wanted, but he could not buy happiness. Once home, he would get drunk and abuse his family and, at times, spend entire nights outside home. All this continued until he was so fed up of life that he started searching for inner peace. He had always learnt in church about how Jesus was god, and there were 3 gods in the trinity, but yet one was to believe that there was one god. He could not swallow such "absurdities". So, he decided to set out on a mission to research about other religions. He studied Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam, out of which he found Islam to be the most rational and authentic. So, he decided to go to a bookstore and purchase a copy of the Qur'an. It was from that day that his life took a complete turn. He was amazed by the wonderful words, the eloquence, the scientific facts, and the honoured status given to women, which he had seen in no other religion. In a month, he was seen at a nearby mosque declaring his faith in Allah. He drank alcohol no more, was committed to his wife, and was not only decently behaved at home, but started interacting a lot with his children and helping in the housework! His wife was surprised at this changed man. She wondered how a religion could bring about such a change in her husband. So, she too started studying the religion, and Alhamdulillah, after a few months embraced it.

Peter, who now changed his name to Yusuf, gave up his job which was once fetching him millions. He took up a halal job (the previous one dealt with interest which is haram) which had a much lower salary. He not only made this sacrifice, he gave away all the money he had earned from his haram job! It was surely a difficult patch for him and his family, but definitely, Allah blesses those who sacrifice for His sake.

## 5. Andrew

This man was the youngest of his 3 siblings. He had just graduated from college and was looking out for a job. Andrew had embraced Islam when he was 18. Once, when he was offering his daily prayers, his mother happened to open the unlocked door and discover his new faith. What followed was a series of heated arguments and threats which were very difficult for this young man to swallow, especially because he was very new to the religion. His family secretly planned to convince him to get back to his old religion. So, they got all sorts of

pastors and priests to try to convert him back, but in vain. He was firm on his religion, and would not bulge an inch. So, his family took the last resort- they told him to convert back to Christianity or leave the house. The brave man actually lifted his bags and walked out with a smile on his face. He had no money, no where to go, and no food to eat. However, he recalled the Qur'anic verse where Allah comforts those like him:

"He who emigrates (from his home) in the Cause of Allah, will find on earth many dwelling places and plenty to live by." (Qur'an, 4:100)

He walked for a few miles till he landed at the door of a mosque which he had once visited. There, a Muslim brother spotted him and directed him to a Dawah centre. The brother is now working at this Dawah centre, where he has, Alhamdulillah, reverted 2 of his own relatives! He leads a fulfilling and satisfying life in an Islamic manner.

Reverts are those who have chosen Allah as their Lord. Allah has chosen them to worship Him and has guided them. This is the privilege that they have in the sight of Allah. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When Allah loves a person, He guides him.

Always remember this, and drive away any unhappiness that comes as a result of Satanic thoughts.

## *14. Your duty continues...*

In this brief booklet, the basic aspects of Islam have been discussed. However, one must always keep gaining more knowledge. Each one of us will die one day and we will meet Allah with whatever deeds we have done. Allah Himself says:

"Every soul shall have a taste of death: And only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have attained the object (of Life). For the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception." (Qur'an, 3:185)

Do you see the accidents happening these days? The bomb blasts? The train and plane accidents? The common road accidents? The tsunamis, the earthquakes? And what not. We are never safe from the clutches of death. Death can overtake us, anytime, anywhere, anyhow. You're just not safe because you're only age 20 or 30. Don't forget the number of kids you've heard of who've died before they reached the age of 15. So, prepare now, start now, and don't delay. This life is very short, and you want to make the best of it. Your goal is Paradise, and not this materialistic, illusory, temporary world.

We must be very careful in our duty to Allah, because the fruits of Paradise are sweet, and not easily attainable. One must strive for them.

Allah gives us precious advice: "O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek means of nearness to Him and strive hard in His way that you may be successful." (Qur'an, 5:35)

Allah has blessed us with this wonderful religion. Just imagine, from all the non-Muslims around you, your family, relatives, friends, He picked just YOU and chose to place the light of iman in your heart. Allah definitely saw some goodness in you and therefore decided to guide you. But, at the same time, that wouldn't be a license to act in any way we like. The bigger the favour Allah has granted us, the better Muslims we ought to be and the more firm we must be in obeying Him. So, what more can we do to thank Allah, than obey Him?